# 48 COM

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**CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

**Forty-eighth session**
**Busan, Republic of Korea**
**19-29 July 2026**

**Item 7B of the Provisional Agenda:**
**State of conservation of properties inscribed on the of World Heritage List**


**Summary**

This document contains information on the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. The World Heritage Committee is requested to review the reports on the state of conservation of properties contained in this document. The full reports of Reactive Monitoring missions requested by the World Heritage Committee are available at the following Web address in their original language: http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/48COM/documents

All previous state of conservation reports will be available through the World Heritage State of conservation Information System at the following Web address: http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc

***Decision required***: The World Heritage Committee may wish to adopt the draft Decision presented at the end of each state of conservation report.

**Note**: For each section, the reports are presented in the English alphabetical order of States Parties.

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# CULTURAL PROPERTIES

## ARAB STATES

### 4. Saint Catherine Area (Egypt)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
2002

*Criteria*
(i)(iii)(iv)(vi)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
N/A

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/954/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 1 (1999)
Total amount approved: USD 19,500
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/954/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
Total amount granted: USD 45,871 from the Netherlands Funds in Trust for strengthening national capacities for the implementation of World Heritage impact assessments; EUR 150,000 from the Government of France for Enhancing Capacities for the Protection of World Heritage Properties in Egypt (2020).

*Previous monitoring missions*
UNESCO advisory mission to Egypt in 2021

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*
- Visitor management
- Impacts of tourism/ visitor/ recreation
- Management systems/ management plan
- Major visitor accommodation and associated infrastructure: the **"**Great Revelation Initiative – the Land of Peace" project

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/954/

*Current conservation issues*

1. On 30 January 2026, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report. An executive summary of this report is available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/954/documents/.
2. Progress in a number of conservation issues addressed by the Committee at its previous sessions is presented in this report, as follows:
    a) A series of field missions have been undertaken by the subcommittees of the Supreme Committee for the Management of World Heritage Sites. These missions aim to ensure the implementation of any recommendations or directives issued in relation to the property. A list has been developed of urgent conservation interventions for the Saint Catherine Monastery, and to address visitor needs;
    b) Archaeological investigations in the property conform to international standards and national regulations. Regular preservation actions are implemented at archaeological sites within the property boundaries;

c) Coordination is underway by the authorities for the preparation of a management plan, conservation plan, and visitor management plan;

d) An April 2025 Presidential directive requires governmental authorities to refrain from implementing any projects within the boundaries of World Heritage properties without prior notification to UNESCO and the preparation of Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs);

e) A September 2025 Presidential directive mandates the suspension of works under the "Great Revelation Initiative – the Land of Peace" (GRILP) project until all UNESCO requirements related to its HIA are met. The State Party welcomes any technical comments or recommendations provided by the Advisory Bodies on the revised HIA;

f) Authorities are maintaining the property's natural environment as well as documenting and considering the implications and changes resulting from climatic factors. Preventive measures are being implemented with due consideration for the cultural and environmental sensitivity of the area. The State Party also emphasises its focus on preserving the local environment and the Bedouin character of the property.

3. Two annexes to the State Party's report present overviews of:

a) Recent archaeological excavation work at three sites within the property;

b) Ongoing and planned conservation interventions for the Saint Catherine Monastery and assessment visitor requirements.

4. The State Party has invited a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to the property to take place in July 2026.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM*

5. Saint Catherine Area is a vast natural landscape (60,100ha) and is of immense spiritual significance to three world monotheistic religions: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. This rugged mountainous landscape contains numerous archaeological and religious sites, and monuments, including the Saint Catherine Monastery, Mount Horeb/Jebel Musa, and the summit of Mount Moses. Therefore, the preservation of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property requires not only the conservation of the remote Saint Catherine Monastery and its built and archaeological elements, but also the entire inscribed natural landscape.

6. A technical review was undertaken for the 2025 revised HIA of the "Great Revelation Initiative – the Land of Peace" (GRILP) project. The review considered that, with its already constructed components, the development could cause significant permanent negative impacts to the integrity and authenticity of the property, and that a Reactive Monitoring mission would be helpful to consider at first hand whether mitigation measures might be developed. The project aims to improve the urban quality of Saint Catherine City, increase the population to 12,000, improve infrastructure and services, and leverage tourism potential. Tourism development is the largest investment in the project. Therefore, the State Party's decision to halt further implementation until the impact on the property's OUV has been assessed is welcome, appropriate, and should remain in force.

7. It is expected that joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to the property provides an opportunity to review the consequences of the GRILP project – as executed to date, as well as the components not yet implemented – on the property's OUV, and to evaluate the Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs) submitted by the State Party on the project in 2024 and 2025. The mission report will be available for consideration by the Committee at its 49th session (2027).

8. The State Party has provided a report with conservation actions for the Monastery and a brief for the archaeological sites. This report, as requested by the Committee in Decision **47 COM 7B.168**, provides insight into past conservation and visitation actions as well as those needed going forward. It also proposes creating an inventory of Saint Catherine's Monastery's collections and a register of archaeological sites. However, the report lacks a timed action plan or urgency prioritisation. The State Party should prioritise the identified conservation actions and include urgent actions in a short-term conservation programme, while retaining mid- and long-term actions for the forthcoming conservation plan.

9. The preparation of a management plan, a conservation plan, and a visitor management plan, as requested by the Committee, is a significant initiative. It is important that a comprehensive inventory of urgent conservation needs is undertaken for the property and linked to a register that includes the attributes of the property's OUV. It is also important to establish current visitation numbers and the carrying capacity at tourism sites of the property, in order to be able to complete a visitor management plan.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.4***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B. Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decisions **45 COM 7B.138,** and **47 COM 7B.168** adopted at its extended 45th session (Riyadh, 2023) and 46th session (UNESCO, 2025), respectively;*

3. *Welcomes the State Party's invitation of the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to the property, and notes that it was undertaken in July 2026, and that it will consider the report of this mission at its 49th session (2027);*

4. *Notes the outcomes of the technical review of the revised Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) of the "Great Revelation Initiative – the Land of Peace" (GRILP) project, which found that aspects that have already been implemented, could result in significant permanent negative impacts on the integrity and authenticity of the property; and looks forward to considering the findings and recommendations of the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission in order to further assess these potential impacts;*

5. *Also welcomes that the Presidential decree of September 2025, which mandates the suspension of works under the GRILP project until all UNESCO requirements related to its HIA are met, and requests that this suspension remain in force until the Committee has had the opportunity to review the recommendations of the July 2026 joint World Heritage Centre/ ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission;*

6. *Encourages the State Party to expedite the completion of the management plan, the conservation plan, and the visitor management plan, and submit drafts of these plans to the World Heritage Centre for technical review before their adoption;*

7. *Also notes that an inventory of conservation needs for the Saint Catherine Monastery has been submitted as annex to the State Party's report on the state of conservation of the property, and also encourages the State Party to:*

    a) *Further develop the inventory of conservation needs to encompass all built and known archaeological attributes of the property, linked to a register of the attributes of the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), which would inform the forthcoming conservation plan,*

    b) *Develop a timed action plan for conservation actions, with short-, mid- and long-term actions, for inclusion in the forthcoming conservation plan,*

    c) *Establish current visitation numbers and the carrying capacity of the property's various tourism sites, to inform the forthcoming visitor management plan;*

8. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2027**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the*

*implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 49th session.*

## 94. Tyre (Lebanon)

See Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.4

## ASIA AND PACIFIC

### 14. Sado Island Gold Mines (Japan)

See Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.4

### 15. Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi (Kazakhstan)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
2003

*Criteria*
(i)(iii)(iv)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
N/A

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1103/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 0
Total amount approved: USD 0
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1103/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
Total amount provided: 2018: USD 47,111 from the UNESCO/Netherlands Funds-in-Trust for the project 'Technical support to the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi in Turkestan, Kazakhstan, by introducing Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach in Central Asia'

*Previous monitoring missions*
December 2010: Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory mission; May 2018: ICOMOS Advisory mission

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*
- Management System/Management Plan (Newly developed Master Plan; Conservation and Management Plan)
- Buildings and Development (Urban high rise/changes to skyline; Construction of a new mosque)
- Major visitor accommodation and associated infrastructure
- Interpretative and visitation facilities
- Housing

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1103/

*Current conservation issues*

1. On 29 January 2026, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report. An executive summary of this report is available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1103/documents/.
2. Progress in a number of conservation issues addressed by the Committee at its previous sessions is presented in those reports, as follows:
    a) The property is in a good stable condition, with regular monitoring, conservation, and maintenance activities undertaken;

b) An Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for 2026–2031 has been prepared, and will be adopted at national level after ICOMOS' review;

c) A Disaster Risk Management Plan and Visitor Management Plan are being developed as part of the IMP;

d) The historic Gurkhana doors have been displayed in the Azret Sultan Museum-Reserve since 2025, with copies installed in the Mausoleum. The feasibility of reinstating them in their original position will be studied, but conservation and contextual considerations may render reinstatement inappropriate. It is envisaged that the doors, as well as the original Mausoleum entrance doors, now undergoing restoration, will be displayed within the Mausoleum after 2027;

e) The International Institute of Central Asian Studies (IICAS) recommendations were scientifically reviewed between 2022 - 2024. 26 of the 32 recommendations were identified for implementation, of which 21 have been implemented and 5 are included for implementation in the IMP. A report of the response to the recommendations undertaken, including multidisciplinary studies, is presented;

f) The ability of national experts to undertake methodologically robust Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs) is evidenced by ICOMOS' review of the of the HIA for the Azret Sultan Reserve-Museum Territory Improvement Project – Phase 5.1 (Archaeological Park);

g) The State Party recognises the need to regulate urban planning within the wider setting of the property and adopted the integration of protection mechanisms into the Turkestan Master Plan and the Law on the Special Status of the City of Turkestan (2025). Ongoing monitoring of the setting provides a baseline for future impact assessments and informing planning processes. If requested, the results of this monitoring can be presented to the World Heritage Centre;

h) No major restorations, alterations or new constructions that may impact the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property are currently planned within the property, its buffer zone, or wider setting.

3. The State Party report includes as annexes:

a) Translated text of the of the law 'On the Special Status of the City of Turkestan';

b) The Integrated Management Plan 2026-2031(IMP);

c) The amended Master Plan, along with relevant documentation.

4. On 3 and 23 June 2026, the State Party submitted two new technical proposals relating to the Mausoleum: a planned Preventive Conservation Project for the Kazandyk Dome and an intervention involving the installation of contemporary glazed tiles. These documents are currently undergoing a technical review by ICOMOS.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM*

5. Significant progress is reported in improving the protection and management of the property, its buffer zone, and its wider setting, particularly in the completion of the draft Integrated Management Plan (IMP) and systematic response to Decision **47 COM 7B.79**. The ongoing monitoring, conservation, and maintenance of the Mausoleum, its setting and wider setting remains important to safeguard the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property.

6. The State Party's commitment to investigate the feasibility of returning the restored historic Gurkana door and the Mausoleum entrance doors to their original positions in the Mausoleum, as at the time of inscription, is welcome. While noting the reinstalment of these attributes in their original positions would be desirable to ensure the integrity of the property, the Committee may wish to emphasise the importance of studying the most appropriate solutions for their presentation and conservation, taking into account established conservation ethics and risk-based approach.

7. The State Party reports extensive actions as advised by the International Institute of Central Asian Studies (IICAS), as encouraged by the Committee. These included actions to manage moisture in the Mausoleum structure. The IICAS recommended that all inappropriate exterior installations should be removed or relocated 100 m away from the monument. The Committee therefore may wish to encourage the State Party to consider relocating the shade structures directly to the south-

east and north-west of the Mausoleum, as these contemporary installations ~~may~~ disrupt the relationship of the Mausoleum with its setting.

8. ICOMOS undertook a review of the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) for the proposed Azret Sultan Reserve-Museum Territory Improvement Phase 5.1 (Archaeological Park) development, submitted in April 2025. A key recommendation was for the State Party to undertake an evaluation of changes in the wider setting since World Heritage inscription, as baseline for future HIAs. The State Party's commitment to submitting the results of this monitoring on request is welcome, considering the importance of a clearly articulated, consolidated baseline study, drawing on existing datasets, to support consistent and comparable future Impact Assessments.

9. ICOMOS has reviewed the IMP and will complete a review of the amended Master Plan and its associated documents. ICOMOS highlights the value of the IMP, including the updated list of attributes and the recording of changes to the wider setting of the property since inscription. The IMP provides a framework and action plan for the development of the requested Disaster Risk Management Plan and Visitor Management Plan. However, some inconsistencies require revision.

10. Of specific importance is the inclusion of Article 2, which states that international treaties ratified by the Republic of Kazakhstan have priority over the Law, thus confirming the imperative of preserving the OUV of the property and the implementation of the *Operational Guidelines*. The version of the Law "On the Special Status of the City of Turkestan" included in the IMP differs from that submitted as annex to the state of conservation report and requires clarification. It is essential that the IMP accurately reflects the Law, specifically regarding planning policies for the wider setting. The Law also needs to be adapted to acknowledge the property boundaries and buffer zone, and to incorporate the IMP, the Visual Axes Protection Zone, and provisions for Impact Assessments as important regulatory mechanisms.

11. Recent developments in the wider setting of the property have had a large negative impact on the contribution of the setting of the property to its OUV. The Committee may wish to stress the need for strict control of the property's setting, including through the strict enforcement of the Visual Axes Protection Zone and current height restrictions:

12. The State Party has achieved significant progress, in particular in the development of the Integrated Management Plan, the implementation of advanced monitoring systems and ongoing studies concerning the property and its wider setting. However, considering that two new proposals for major technical interventions to the Mausoleum were submitted on 3 and 23 June 2026, and subject to the outcomes of the ICOMOS Technical Reviews, the State Party could be encouraged to invite an Advisory mission, which could provide a timely opportunity to support the State Party in consolidating its efforts, including through on-site technical dialogue aimed at further refining the management framework, reviewing the evolution of the setting, and identifying appropriate approaches for the conservation and presentation of all attributes, in particular for the proposed restoration for the Mausoleum.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.15***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decision **47 COM 7B.79**, adopted at its 47th session (UNESCO, 2025),*

3. *Welcomes the significant progress made in the development of the protection and management system of the property, including ongoing restoration and stabilisation work, monitoring and the submission of the draft Integrated Management Plan (IMP), which includes the framework and action plan for the development of the requested Disaster Risk Management Plan and Visitor Management Plan and extracts from the City of Turkestan's updated Master Plan for 2020-2035;*

4. *Welcomes the State Party's commitment to investigate the feasibility of returning the historic Gurkana and Mausoleum doors, the latter of which is being restored, to the property; noting that these historic doors are attributes of the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), stresses that maintaining the attributes of a World Heritage property within the boundaries of the property is essential to preserve its OUV, and requests that the Gurkana and Mausoleum doors be returned to the property, preferably in their locations as per the time of inscription of the property;*

5. *Welcomes the implementation of 26 of the 32 recommendations made by the International Institute of Central Asian Studies (IICAS) including scientific studies; noting that contemporary interventions including shade structure affect the property's immediate setting, underscores the importance of the IICAS recommendation to remove inappropriate exterior installations to at least 100 m away from the Mausoleum, and requests the State Party to relocate the shade structures with particular attention to their visual and spatial impact on the property's OUV;*

6. *Welcomes the State Party's indication that it will submit the analytical results of the monitoring of the wider setting of the property and, considering the importance of a clearly articulated, consolidated baseline study, drawing on existing datasets, to support consistent and comparable future Impact Assessments, requests that these be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review;*

7. *Takes note of the submission of an English translation of the "On the Special Status of the City of Turkestan" Law, annexed to the State Party report and included in the draft IMP, and that there is the need to ensure that the territory of the property, its boundaries and its buffer zone, as well as the IMP and the Visual Axes Protection Zone as important regulatory mechanisms are explicitly embedded in the Law, and requests the State Party to ensure full alignment between the Law, the Integrated Management Plan and the Master Plan, including explicit integration of the property boundaries, buffer zone delineation, Visual Axes Protection Zone, and clear provisions for Heritage Impact Assessments, and submit an updated draft version of the Law to the World Heritage Centre for review before adopting a revision to the Law;*

8. *Considers that the IMP should be revised to accurately reflect the* Law *"On the Special Status of the City of Turkestan", including in relation to the planning policies that relate to the wider setting of the property, and encourages the State Party to revise the IMP and the the City of Turkestan's updated Master Plan for 2020-2035 according to ICOMOS' recommendations;*

9. *Stresses the need for strict control of the property's wider setting, including through the strict enforcement of the Visual Axes Protection Zone and height restrictions;*

10. *Encourages the State Party to invite an Advisory mission to the property in order to provide relevant advice on the conservation of the property, review the evolution of the property's wider setting since inscription, support the finalization and alignment of the Integrated Management Plan, Master Plan and legal framework, and further strengthen technical cooperation on the preservation of the property's OUV, including through the management of its wider setting;*

11. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2027**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 50th session.*

## EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

### 26. Butrint (Albania)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
1992

*Criteria*
(iii)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
1997-2005

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/570/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 2 (from 1996-1997)
Total amount approved: USD 106,000
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/570/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
N/A

*Previous monitoring missions*
1999: World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/Butrint Foundation mission; 2001: World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS mission; 2003: World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS mission; 2005: World Heritage Centre /ICOMOS/ICCROM mission; 2007: World Heritage/ICOMOS/ICCROM joint mission; 2022 joint World Heritage/ICOMOS Advisory mission

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*
- Insufficient management mechanisms
- Illegal constructions
- Slow progress on the implementation of the recommendations of the joint missions (issue resolved)
- Tourism development

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/570/

*Current conservation issues*

1. On 30 January 2026, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report, which is available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/570/documents/.
2. Progress in a number of conservation issues raised by the Committee at its previous sessions is presented as follows:
   a) Efforts are ongoing to institutionalise Heritage Impact Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessments processes to ensure that projects within the property, its buffer zone and the National Park are assessed in a consistent and systematic manner and in line with international guidance;
   b) The importance of prior consultation and information-sharing with the World Heritage Centre is reaffirmed, with a view to ensuring the protection of the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);
   c) The Archaeological Conservation Management Plan (ACMP), the Hydrological & Ecological Plan (HEP), strategies for Health & Safety, a Disaster Management framework, a Site Security

Plan, and a Traffic, Transport, and Visitor Management Study, as well as an HIA and EIA concerning the proposed new Visitor Centre have been submitted.

d) Clarification is provided that *'regulated ecotourism in nature*' refers to controlled, low-impact, nature-based visitor use permitted in the Recreational Zone, Traditional Use Zone, Sustainable Development Sub-zone, and partially in the Core Sub-zone and the Cultural and Landscape Heritage Sub-zone, subject to approval and in compliance with the Integrated Management Plan 2020-2030.

e) A Community Engagement Officer has been established within the organisational structure of the Butrint Management Foundation (BMF), serving as a permanent interface with local stakeholders; in parallel, a range of advocacy, educational and capacity-building initiatives has been undertaken to promote awareness of cultural and natural heritage values among local communities.

f) Initial information has been provided on a small-scale grant scheme, to be launched by the BMF in 2026, aimed at supporting local enterprises linked to cultural heritage and strengthening capacities and tourism-related infrastructure in a controlled and sustainable manner;

g) On 10 February 2026, additional information, including an HIA and a draft EIA concerning the proposed new Visitor Centre, was submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;

h) Concerning the Ksamil by-pass road project, it is reported that:

   i. In January 2025, the alignment of the segment located within the buffer zone was approved, while the section crossing the property was required to be revised,

   ii. In August 2025, further decision-making was deferred pending the preparation of an HIA. Subsequently, works were identified on site within the property and its buffer zone, and on 17 October 2025 the National Institute of Cultural Heritage (NICH) ordered the suspension of works,

   iii. On 24 October and 9 December 2025, the NICH reiterated its request for updates and emphasised the need for an HIA and prior consultation with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies.

   iv. At the time of reporting, no final approval had been granted.

3. Following the Committee's reiterated request in Decision 47 COM 7B.93 that the State Party provide, as a matter of priority and no later than 15 December 2025, a clear map delineating the boundaries of both the property and its buffer zone as inscribed, in accordance with Decision 23 COM VIII.C.2 (1999), the related 1999 ICOMOS Evaluation, and Decision 31 COM 8B.60 (2007), Albania submitted related information, which the World Heritage Centre acknowledged while requesting that the map be submitted at the earliest possible opportunity and no later than 1 February 2026. On 10 March 2026, the State Party submitted explanatory documents stating that the map already provided within the framework of the Retrospective Inventory to delineate the buffer zone should also be considered as delineating the boundaries of the property itself, in line with Decisions 23 COM VIII.C.2 and 24 BUR IV.A.16.

4. On 22 December 2025, the World Heritage Centre transmitted to the State Party third-party information providing evidence of the ongoing implementation of the Ksamil by-pass road project within the property and its buffer zone, as well as information regarding the impacts of the 'Manastiri Bay Resort' development on the archaeological potential of Butrint National Park.

5. In its response of 17 February 2026, the State Party reiterated information previously provided concerning the Ksamil by-pass road project in its state of conservation report. The State Party also provided information on the 'Manastiri Bay Resort' project, located within the buffer zone, in response to above-mentioned third-party information. The State Party indicated that archaeological procedures had been undertaken prior to and during implementation, and that no archaeological remains were identified within the construction footprint. Following a technical review by the competent authorities, archaeological monitoring during earth-moving activities had been required; however, this had not been implemented at the commencement of works and was subsequently being addressed.

6. Separately, on 17 February 2026, the State Party submitted additional documentation concerning a hotel development project in Ksamil (lots 7/493 and 7/494) by EPIDAMN-C Ltd for review by the Advisory Bodies.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM*

7. While efforts to institutionalise the HIA process are noted, the protracted timeframe for its full operationalisation remains a matter of concern. In view of ongoing infrastructure and tourism-related developments affecting the property, some of which have reportedly commenced without the required assessments, the Committee may wish to underline the urgency of finalising this process and to request that, pending its effective implementation, no new permits or approvals be granted for projects that may affect the property's OUV.

8. The submission of the Archaeological Conservation Management Plan (ACMP), Hydrological and Ecological Plan (HEP), Strategies for Health and Safety, Disaster Management Framework, Site Security Plan, and Traffic, Transport and Visitor Management Study is welcomed. These constitute a substantial and technically valuable body of documentation. However, they appear insufficiently focused on sustaining the property's OUV and are not yet adequately integrated into the broader framework of the Integrated Management Plan (IMP) 2020–2030. The Committee may wish to encourage the State Party to undertake the necessary revisions to address these shortcomings and submit the revised documents for review.

9. The appointment of a Community Engagement Officer within the BMF is welcomed as a positive measure to strengthen engagement with local stakeholders and support their participation in the management of the property.

10. The planned introduction of a small-scale grant scheme planned in 2026 to support local enterprises linked to cultural heritage, as well as the clarification provided on the concept of 'regulated ecotourism in nature', are also noted. The Committee may nevertheless wish to invite the State Party to further clarify the scope and modalities of the proposed grant scheme, including the notion of 'tourism-led infrastructure', and to ensure that such initiatives remain fully compatible with the protection of the property's OUV.

11. A range of development projects and interventions are currently underway or under consideration within the property and its buffer zone, at different stages of planning and implementation. These raise concerns regarding both their potential individual and cumulative impacts on the property's OUV and their conformity with the requirements of the Operational Guidelines, particularly in relation to prior notification, the timely preparation of impact assessments, and their submission for review by the Advisory Bodies. With regard to the hotel development project in Ksamil (lots 7/493 and 7/494), the Committee may wish to urge the State Party to suspend implementation pending the preparation and submission of a detailed HIA, together with complete project documentation, for review by the Advisory Bodies. The Committee may also wish to urge the State Party to adopt a more effective management approach for the buffer zone and wider setting, with a view to avoiding or minimising further development pressures in areas that play a key role in sustaining the property's OUV.

12. Although the section of the Ksamil by-pass road project within the property is reported to have been halted in October 2025 to allow for revision, it is noted with concern that third-party information shows evidence that works are ongoing both within the property and its buffer zone. Regretting that comprehensive project documentation and the requested HIA have not been submitted, the Committee may wish to urge the State Party to ensure the immediate enforcement of the NICH's order to halt works within the property and to submit, as a matter of utmost priority, all relevant documentation and corresponding HIA/EIA for both sections of the project, in accordance with Paragraphs 118bis and 172 of the *Operational Guidelines* and based on the methodology set out in the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessment in a World Heritage context*.

13. While it is indicated that the required archaeological procedures were undertaken for the 'Manastiri Bay Resort' project, located within the buffer zone, it is noted with serious concern that archaeological monitoring was not initiated at the commencement of construction. The Committee may wish to express serious concern regarding initiation of works under these conditions and to urge the State Party to halt further implementation and to submit, as a matter of urgency, all relevant documentation, including an HIA to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to any continuation of works.

14. Concerning the proposed Butrint National Park Visitor Centre, the considerable efforts undertaken to prepare a substantial body of technical and analytical documentation are acknowledged. However, significant concerns remain, particularly in relation to the proposed 'Archaeological Gate' where the current design would entail irreversible disturbance to buried archaeological remains that contribute to the property's OUV, as well as to the scale of the functional programme for both the 'Archaeological Gate' and the 'Mountain Gate' within their sensitive heritage context. The Committee may wish to invite the State Party to suspend implementation of the project pending the outcome of comprehensive archaeological investigations at the 'Archaeological Gate', to undertake a rigorous assessment of construction-related impacts, and to reduce the functional programmes of both structures in relation to visitor orientation, heritage interpretation objectives, as well the conservation and management framework of the property. An independent visual impact assessment should be also undertaken and integrated into a revised HIA.

15. The clarifications provided regarding the boundaries of the property and its buffer zone are welcomed. The Committee may wish to invite the State Party to submit, by 1 December 2026, a final map clearly showing the boundaries of the World Heritage property and its buffer zone to the World Heritage Centre, in order to complete the Retrospective Inventory exercise and enable its presentation to the Committee at its 49th session as a boundary clarification. This map should be accompanied by relevant GIS data relating to the boundaries of the World Heritage property, its buffer zone and the Butrint National Park, as well as the different zones within the Park.

16. In addition, following the Decision N° 59/2022 of the Council of Ministers modifying the boundaries of the Butrint National Park, which until then had encompassed the property and its buffer zone, two small areas of the property and three larger areas of the buffer zone were excluded from the National Park and, consequently, from the protection it provided. Detailed explanations are therefore needed regarding how those areas of the property and buffer zone that lie outside the Butrint National Park are protected and managed at the different territorial and administrative levels.

17. In view of the range of development pressures identified and the need to assess the effectiveness of management and protection arrangements, the Committee may wish to request the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to the property, in accordance with Paragraphs 169 and 170 of the Operational Guidelines. The mission should assess the overall state of conservation of the property, the effectiveness of its management and protection framework, the implementation of the recommendations of the 2022 World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory mission, and the impacts of current and proposed developments on the property's OUV, including the 'Manastiri Bay Resort', the Ksamil by-pass project and the proposed Butrint National Park Visitor Centre. The mission report should be submitted to the World Heritage Committee for examination at its 49th session.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.26***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decisions **46 COM 7B.1** and **47 COM 7B.93** adopted at its 46th (New Delhi, 2024) and 47th (UNESCO, 2025) sessions respectively,*

3. *Welcomes the appointment of a Community Engagement Officer within the Butrint Management Foundation as a positive step towards strengthening engagement with local stakeholders, and the clarifications provided by the State Party regarding the concept of 'regulated ecotourism in nature'; and requests the State Party to clarify the scope and modalities of the small-scale grant scheme planned for 2026, including the notion of 'tourism-led infrastructure', and to ensure that any such initiatives remain fully compatible with the protection of the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);*

4. *Also welcomes the submission of the Archaeological Conservation Management Plan (ACMP), Hydrological & Ecological Plan (HEP), Strategies for Health & Safety, Disaster*

*Management Framework, Site Security Plan, and Traffic, Transport and Visitor Management Study as a substantial and technically valuable body of documentation; notes, however, that these documents need to be structured around the objective of supporting the property's OUV and integrated within the wider framework of the IMP 2020-2030, and also requests the State Party to undertake the necessary amendments in line with the recommendations of ICOMOS Technical Review;*

5. *Notes the efforts made by the State Party to institutionalise the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes, but expresses concern regarding the prolonged timeline for their finalisation; further requests the State Party to finalise this process as a matter of urgency and, pending its implementation, to ensure that no new permits, approvals or decisions are granted within the property, its buffer zone or wider setting that may affect its OUV, and to strengthen the management of the buffer zone and wider setting in order to avoid or minimise development pressures on areas that support the maintenance of the property's OUV;*

6. *Also notes the submission of the HIA and EIA for the proposed Butrint National Park Visitor Centre project, and that these were the subject of a Technical Review by ICOMOS, and invites the State Party to:*

   a) *Suspend implementation of the project pending the outcome of comprehensive archaeological investigations at the 'Archaeological Gate',*

   b) *Undertake a rigorous assessment of construction-related impacts,*

   c) *Reduce the functional programme of both structures and clearly justify them in relation to visitor orientation, heritage interpretation objectives and the conservation and management framework of the property,*

   d) *Undertake an independent visual impact assessment and integrate its findings into a revised HIA,*

   e) *Implement in full the recommendations of the ICOMOS Technical Review;*

7. *Further notes the clarification provided on the boundaries of the World Heritage property in response to the requests set out in the Decisions **46 COM 7B.1** (2024) and **47 COM 7B.93** (2025), and invites the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2026**:*

   a) *a final map clearly showing the boundaries of the property and its buffer zone as inscribed, in accordance with Decisions 23 COM VIII.C.2, 24 BUR IV.A.16 and 31 COM 8B.60, in order to complete the Retrospective Inventory exercise and for presentation to the Committee at its 49th session,*

   b) *GIS data showing the boundaries of the World Heritage property, its buffer zone and the Butrint National Park, as well as the different zones within the Park;*

8. *Requests furthermore to the State Party to provide detailed explanations of how those areas of the property and buffer zone that now lie outside the Butrint National Park are protected and managed at different territorial and administrative levels,*

9. *Notes with concern the information regarding the Ksamil by-pass road project, including the approval of the section located within the buffer zone and the interventions on the ground, including within the property, despite the order issued by the National Institute of Cultural Heritage to halt works in October 2025; urges the State Party to halt any further implementation of, and decision relating to, the Ksamil by-pass project, and to submit, as a matter of utmost urgency, all project documentation, including the corresponding HIA and EIA for both sections of the road, to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies, in conformity with Paragraphs 118bis and 172 of the*

*Operational Guidelines and based on the methodology set out in the* Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context *(2022);*

10. *Also notes with serious concern the procedural shortcomings in relation to the 'Manastiri Bay Resort' project located in the buffer zone, in particular the failure to initiate archaeological monitoring at the commencement of construction works; and also urges the State Party to halt any further implementation and/or decision, and to submit all relevant documentation concerning this development project to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies in accordance with Paragraphs 118bis and 172 of the Operational Guidelines;*

11. *Urges furthermore the State Party to suspend implementation of the hotel development project in Ksamil (lots 7/493 and 7/494) pending the preparation and submission of a revised HIA, together with complete project documentation, to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies in line with the recommendations of the ICOMOS Technical Review;*

12. *Requests furthermore the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to the property, in accordance with Paragraphs 169 and 170 of the Operational Guidelines in order to assess the overall state of conservation of the property, the effectiveness of its management and protection framework, the implementation of the recommendations of the 2022 World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory mission, and the impacts of current and proposed developments on the property's OUV, including the 'Manastiri Bay Resort', the Ksamil by-pass project and the proposed Butrint National Park Visitor Centre; and requests that the mission report be submitted for examination at its 49th session;*

13. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2027**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and on the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 49th session.*

## 36. Historical Monuments of Mtskheta (Georgia)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
1994

*Criteria*
(iii)(iv)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
2009-2016

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/708/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 4 (from 1997-2010)
Total amount approved: USD 96,160
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/708/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
Total amount provided: USD 250,000 (Funds-in-Trust Georgia/UNESCO Agreement: Cultural heritage advisory service to the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia, implemented under the Third Regional Development Project)

*Previous monitoring missions*
August 1993: World Heritage Centre mission; May-June 1994: ICOMOS Evaluation mission; 1999: World Heritage Centre mission; May 2001: Heritage and Tourism Master Plan mission; October 2001: International Expert Team "Heritage and Tourism Master Plan" mission; September 2001: Mission on the UNDP-SPPD Project; 2001: International Expert Team mission; November 2003, June 2008 and April 2012: joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring missions; March 2010, February 2018 and March 2026: joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring missions; November 2014: joint ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission and joint World Heritage Centre/World Bank mission; November 2015, February 2016, December 2016, and July-October 2017: World Heritage Centre technical assistance missions; December 2018: World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory mission; February 2020: ICOMOS Advisory mission.

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*
- Lack of Urban Master Plan of the City of Mtskheta
- Privatization of surrounding land
- Natural erosion of stone
- Loss of authenticity during previous works carried out by the Church
- Inappropriate urban development within a sensitive historical environment (issue resolved)
- Lack of a management mechanism (issue resolved)
- Lack of definition of the unified buffer zone (issue resolved)
- Insufficient coordination between the Georgian Church and the national authorities (issue resolved)

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/708/

*Current conservation issues*
1. On 29 January 2026, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report, a summary of which is available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/708/documents/, addressing the issues raised by the Committee in its Decision **47 COM 7B.107** as follows:

   a) The conceptual framework of the Mtskheta Urban Land Use Master Plan (ULUMP) has been updated in line with the recommendations of the 2024 ICOMOS Technical Review. A targeted adjustment to the Cultural Heritage Protection Zones of Mtskheta will pave the way for the finalisation and adoption of the ULUMP, which the State Party is committed to achieve in close coordination with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies;

   b) The Moratorium remains in force until the Management Documentation for the Spatial Territorial Development of Mtskheta has been adopted and all the necessary regulatory and monitoring mechanisms are fully operational;

   c) Conservation works in the interior of the Great Church of Jvari Monastery are planned to commence in early spring 2026 and will be undertaken in accordance with ICOMOS recommendations for the project (February 2025), while a conservation study of the exterior is planned;

   d) Emergency interventions have been carried out on the façades of the Saint Nino Church of Samtavro Monastery; conservation proposals for the damaged western section of the monastery's perimeter wall are expected to be completed in the first half of 2026;

   e) Following a rainwater infiltration incident in Svetitskhoveli Cathedral in spring 2025, emergency measures have been undertaken; a detailed conservation intervention plan is being prepared and will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre;

   f) A revised Tbilisi Wind Power Plant project, together with a Heritage Impact Assessment, was submitted to the World Heritage Centre in July 2025;

   g) Implementation of the Tbilisi Bypass project is expected to commence in the near future.

2. A joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission to the property took place from 9 to 12 March 2026. The mission aimed to assess the overall state of conservation of the property, review the implementation of the Committee's previous recommendations, and evaluate progress made by the State Party in addressing long-standing management and conservation challenges affecting the property and its setting. The mission report is available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/708/documents/.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM*

3. The State Party's commitment to finalising and adopting the long-overdue ULUMP, requested by the Committee since 2010, is welcomed. While the State Party has not been able to submit the ULUMP to the World Heritage Centre by 1 February 2026, as requested by the Committee in its latest decision, confirmation that the conceptual framework of the ULUMP has been updated in line with the recommendations of the 2024 ICOMOS Technical Review represents a positive step forward. The targeted adjustment to the Cultural Heritage Protection Zones of Mtskheta presented to the mission is also welcomed. Both developments should facilitate the prompt completion of the ULUMP, which should remain a priority. The Committee may wish to request that the final draft of the conceptual framework be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies without delay, and to urge the State Party to finalise the ULUMP as a matter of priority and submit its final draft to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to its adoption.

4. The State Party's confirmation that the Moratorium remains in force until the Management Documentation for the Spatial Territorial Development of Mtskheta has been adopted and all necessary regulatory, control and monitoring mechanisms are fully operational is noted. While the moratorium continues to serve as key preventive mechanism, the mission noted that its inconsistent enforcement, combined with the increasing volume of project submissions, has reduced its effectiveness. It is recommended that the Committee reiterate its request to the State Party to ensure the strict and consistent enforcement of the Moratorium until the ULUMP has been formally adopted and all necessary control and monitoring mechanisms for the property are fully established and operational.

5. In the meantime, the State Party should be encouraged, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, to continue submitting detailed project documentation to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to any decisions being taken that could be difficult to reverse. Such submissions should include the results of a rigorous assessment of the potential impacts of each project on the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), reviewed by the World Heritage Protection Council of Georgia and based on Heritage Impact Assessments prepared in accordance with the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*. The State Party should also be requested to prepare an updated Management Plan for the property, while making use of the new *Managing World Heritage* Resource Manual, and to submit its final draft to the World Heritage for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to its adoption.

6. The State Party continues to address the urgent conservation issues affecting the property, in particular at the Jvari Monastery Complex and in Svetitskhoveli Cathedral following the rainwater infiltration incident of spring 2025. The Committee may wish to note with satisfaction the State Party's systematic dialogue with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies regarding conservation interventions at the three components of the property, and to encourage it to maintain this consultative approach. The final draft of the Jvari Monastery Master Plan, together with the completed conservation study for the exterior of the monastery, as well as a comprehensive conservation project for Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, should be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies.

7. The mission reviewed a number of development proposals affecting the property and its wider setting. Regarding the revised Tbilisi Wind Power Plant project, the mission concluded that it would still result in adverse visual impacts on key attributes conveying the property's OUV, particularly Jvari Monastery, as the wind turbines would remain partly visible from the site. It is recommended that the Committee request the State Party not to proceed with the project in its current form and to explore alternative project options that would avoid any adverse impacts on the property's OUV.

8. The Committee has already welcomed the construction of the Tbilisi Bypass and may wish to encourage the State Party to proceed with its implementation. The Committee may also wish to

invite the State Party to explore appropriate technical solutions to better integrate into the landscape the section of the highway crossing the buffer zone below Jvari Monastery. While the former would contribute to reducing traffic volumes beneath Mount Jachui, on which the Monastery is located, the latter would significantly mitigate the current negative impact of the highway on the monastery's immediate setting.

9. In conclusion, the overall state of conservation of the property remains fragile. While the main attributes conveying the property's OUV are generally in good condition, the historic urban landscape of Mtskheta continues to face increasing pressures from tourism development and the cumulative impacts of inappropriate urban development. The absence of an effective and fully operational planning and management framework remains the most significant threat to the property. The prompt completion and adoption of the ULUMP, together with the establishment of effective protection, control and monitoring mechanisms, therefore remain essential. If these challenges are not addressed comprehensively and without delay, they may, in the longer term, adversely affect the attributes conveying the property's OUV, as well as its conditions of authenticity and integrity.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.36***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/25/47.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decisions **45 COM 7B.186** and **47 COM 7B.107**, adopted at its extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023) and its 47th (UNESCO, 2025) sessions, respectively,*

3. *Welcomes the State Party's continued commitment to the development of the Mtskheta Urban Land Use Master Plan (ULUMP), notes with concern the delay in its finalisation, requests the State Party to submit, without delay, the final draft of the conceptual framework of the ULUMP to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies, and reiterates its request to prioritise the finalisation of the ULUMP and to submit its final draft to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to its adoption;*

4. *Takes note of the State Party's confirmation that the 'Enactment of Special Regime of Regulation of Urban Development and Land Privatisation in the Cultural Heritage Protection Zones of Mtskheta Municipality' (the Moratorium) remains in force until the Management Documentation for the Spatial Territorial Development of Mtskheta is adopted and all necessary regulatory, control and monitoring mechanisms are fully operational, and also requests the State Party to ensure its strict and consistent enforcement in the meantime;*

5. *Encourages the State Party, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, to continue submitting detailed project documentation to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to any decisions being taken that could be difficult to reverse, and further requests the State Party to ensure that such submissions are supported by Heritage Impact Assessments prepared in accordance with the* Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context *and include the conclusions of the World Heritage Protection Council of Georgia regarding each project's potential impact on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property;*

6. *Also welcomes the sustained dialogue between the State Party, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies regarding conservation interventions at the three components of the property, and also encourages the continuation of this consultative approach;*

7. *Requests furthermore the State Party to prepare an updated Management Plan for the property, making use of the new* Managing World Heritage *Resource Manual, and to submit its final draft to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies at the earliest opportunity and prior to its adoption;*

8. *Invites the State Party to proceed with the implementation of the Tbilisi Bypass project and to explore appropriate technical solutions to better integrate into the landscape the section of the highway crossing the buffer zone below Jvari Monastery;*

9. *Also notes with concern the conclusions of the 2026 joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission regarding the revised Tbilisi Wind Power Plant project, requests the State Party not to proceed with the project in its current form owing to its adverse visual impacts on attributes conveying the OUV of the property, and also invites it to explore alternative options that would avoid any adverse impacts on the property's OUV;*

10. *Also takes note of the conclusions of the 2026 joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission to the property and further requests the State Party to implement its recommendations in a timely manner in order to address long-standing management and conservation challenges affecting the property and its setting;*

11. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2027**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 50th session.*

## 45. Historic Centre of Saint Petersburg and Related Groups of Monuments (Russian Federation)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
1990

*Criteria*
(i)(ii)(iv)(vi)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
N/A

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/540/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 1 (from 2002-2002)
Total amount approved: USD 5,000
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/540/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
Total amount provided to the property: USD 18,000 from the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust

*Previous monitoring missions*
February 2006: joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS mission; May 2009 and March 2010: joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring missions; 2019: joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory mission; January 2026: joint World Heritage Centre/ ICOMOS Advisory mission

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*

- Quality of new design projects in the inscribed zone
- High-rise development
- Confusion over definition and extent of inscribed property and its buffer zones

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/540/

*Current conservation issues*

1. On 14 November 2023, the World Heritage Centre invited the State Party to submit a report on the state of conservation of the property by 1 February 2024, in response to concerns regarding the individual and cumulative impacts of high-rise and infrastructure projects on the property. Updated reports were then requested and received in December 2024 and December 2025, preceded by a series of ICOMOS Technical Reviews, including those concerning the proposed Lakhta Centres 2 and 3.

2. In its latest state of conservation report, received on 2 December 2025, an executive summary of which is available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/540/documents/, the State Party reports that:

   a) The property benefits from a range of protection mechanisms, including:

      i. A federal protection framework for the Historic Centre of Saint Petersburg component through its designation as a 'historical settlement', while the Master Plan of Saint Petersburg incorporates provisions for the preservation of the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), and an advisory national standard equates cultural heritage protection zones with buffer zones in the World Heritage system,

      ii. The Saint Petersburg Law on Protection Zones of Culture Heritage Sites (No. 820-7), which includes height restrictions to protect the city's skyline and panoramas,

      iii. The identification of 915 street-front buildings as 'valuable environment objects', and 4,656 as 'valuable ordinary objects', benefiting from differentiated protection measures,

      iv. The regular preparation and submission of Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs) for major development projects;

   b) In place of the single management body recommended by the 2019 Advisory mission, a Coordination Council chaired by the Ministry of Culture has been established to consider management issues and strategic decisions relating to the property, while public participation is facilitated through various consultative and advisory bodies;

   c) Public outreach and heritage awareness initiatives continue;

   d) Regarding specific projects within Saint Petersburg:

      i. HIAs for Lakhta Centres 2 and 3, which concluded that the projects would have neutral or minimal positive impacts on the property's OUV, were reviewed by ICOMOS. The State Party reports that no construction permits have been issued, that the relevant planning provisions enabling their construction have not yet been approved, and that the HIA reports are currently being revised in response to ICOMOS recommendations,

      ii. HIAs for the Big Smolensky Bridge and the East-West Expressway, submitted to the World Heritage Centre in 2024, concluded that the projects would have neutral or minimal positive impacts on the property's OUV,

      iii. A museum project dedicated to the archaeology and history of Okhta Cape is under development, while archaeological remains within the protected area continue to be protected under national legislation,

      iv. The proposed reconstruction of the Smolny Cathedral bell tower cannot be implemented in its current form owing to conflicts with the existing legal protection framework, and alternative locations are being explored,

      v. The proposed Wedding Palace project is reported to comply with applicable height restrictions and requirements for the protection of significant views and panoramas,

vi. Restoration of the Main Imperial Stables is planned in accordance with the approved protection requirements for the monument and without new construction.

3. Following an invitation from the State Party, a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory mission to the property took place from 26 to 29 January 2026. Its purpose was to assess the potential impacts of a number of development, infrastructure and restoration projects on the property's OUV, review recent amendments to the legal protection framework, and evaluate changes in the state of conservation since the previous joint UNESCO/ICOMOS Advisory mission in 2019. The analysis that follows incorporates the conclusions and recommendations of the 2026 Advisory mission.

4. On 3 June 2026, an in-use naval vessel stationed within the component of the property 'The Historical Part of the Town of Kronstadt' sustained damage during a drone attack. No information has been received from the State Party concerning any potential impacts on the historic built fabric of the component.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM*

5. Between 2006 and 2014, the Committee examined the state of conservation of this property at seven sessions due to unclear component boundaries, the absence of approved buffer zones, pressures from large-scale and high-rise developments, and deficiencies in coordinated management and planning controls. A principal concern was the proposed 87-storey, 462 m commercial office tower at Okhta Cape. Through successive Decisions (31 COM 7B.102, 32 COM 7B.105, 33 COM 7B.118, 34 COM 7B.95, and 35 COM 7B.104), the Committee urged the State Party to halt the project, requested revised designs accompanied by independent impact assessments, and warned of the possible inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, should the Okhta Centre project proceed without adequate assessment and without demonstrating that the property's OUV would be preserved. Following relocation of the project to the Lakhta area, the Committee, in Decision 36 COM 7B.85 (2012) 'welcomed the efforts of the State Party deployed for cancellation of the 'Okhta-Center' tower project,' while noting 'the development of a new skyscraper project of the Lakhta business Center' and requesting 'a detailed heritage impact assessment for this new project […] before any final decisions are made.' While noting the State Party's position that the development was located outside relevant protection zones, the tower was ultimately constructed without the requested HIA having been submitted to the World Heritage Centre. Both the 2019 and 2026 joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory missions subsequently concluded that Lakhta Centre 1 has negatively affected the property's OUV.

6. Current proposals for Lakhta Centre 2 and Lakhta Centre 3 would expand the Lakhta business district with towers of 555 m and 703 m respectively, both located largely within the property. The State Party reports that no construction permits have yet been issued for these developments, that the relevant planning provisions have not yet been approved, and that revised impact assessments are being prepared in response to the 2025 ICOMOS Technical Reviews. Nevertheless, although the 2026 mission did not have access to the construction site, it observed what appeared to be preparatory works along parts of the Gulf of Finland shoreline, the precise nature of which could not be confirmed. The mission therefore stressed the importance of ensuring that no irreversible decisions are taken before the projects have been fully assessed. The mission's conclusions were consistent with the 2025 ICOMOS Technical Reviews, which strongly advised that both proposals be cancelled owing to their significant adverse impacts on the property's OUV. It further concluded that the proposed towers would pose a direct threat to the property's OUV, as they would have a major negative and irreversible impact on the property's historic urban planning structure, the unity and hierarchy of its architectural dominants, the coherence of its skyline and silhouettes, the integrity of panoramic views across the Neva River and Gulf of Finland, and the spatial relationships between ensembles that underpin the city's historic composition. While noting that development of the site may be possible in principle, the mission advised that any future proposals should be consistent with maintaining the property's OUV and developed through an iterative HIA process.

7. Despite a number of measures since 2019 aimed at strengthening the protection framework, including amendments to Saint Petersburg Law No. 820-7, the extension of protection to additional categories of historic buildings, and the establishment of a Coordination Council, the 2026 mission identified significant weaknesses in the property's protection and management system. In particular, it noted the continuing misalignment between property boundaries and local

regulatory zones, the absence of designated buffer zones, and the lack of an effective management structure for the property as a whole. While acknowledging the positive contribution of recent amendments to Law No. 820-7, the mission observed that these measures have not addressed a number of long-standing issues previously raised by the Committee, including the need for a comprehensive Management Plan and a management authority with overall responsibility for the property. Both the 2019 and 2026 missions also recommended finalising amendments to Federal Law No. 73-FZ to align it with the Convention and the Operational Guidelines for its implementation. The 2026 mission further observed that the new Master Plan for Saint Petersburg does not incorporate the property's OUV because no federal requirement currently obliges it to do so.

8. The 2026 mission assessed several successful restoration and rehabilitation projects, including at Tsarkoe Selo Palace, demonstrating the State Party's capacity to deliver high-quality conservation work that contributes to the property's authenticity. It also recommended scientific and technical studies to inform restoration at the 'Physiologist I.P. Pavlov Scientific Campus' component and continued vigilance regarding development pressures within the setting of the 'Koltushskaya Elevation'.

9. While noting that impact assessments have been prepared for a number of major development and infrastructure projects and submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review, the Committee may wish to note with concern that several large-scale projects have commenced prior to notification to the World Heritage Centre in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines and before appropriate HIAs had been undertaken. These included the new business centre at Okhta Cape, which the mission concluded introduces a contrasting visual and spatial vocabulary that weakens the coherence of the area. The mission also found that the Judicial Quarter, the Bolshoy Smolensky Bridge, and the double-tiered vehicular bridge over the 'Moskovskaya Road' component proceeded without timely notification or the preparation of HIAs at a stage when project design could still be influenced, with the latter having a pronounced negative impact on the axial spatial character of its component. The mission additionally advised against the reconstruction of a contemporary 174.5m bell tower for Smolny Cathedral based on an unexecuted eighteenth-century design and using modern materials and on a different site, concluding that it would diminish the property's authenticity.

10. Both the 2019 and 2026 missions concluded that the Wedding Palace project would negatively impact the property's OUV and therefore warrants cancellation. Similar concerns were raised regarding the proposed Planetograd development within the Blockade Ring component, which would diminish its legibility within the landscape. In addition, while welcoming the intention to restore and adaptively reuse the Main Imperial Stables, it is recommended that the project be subject to a comprehensive HIA before implementation, particularly in relation to the proposed glazed courtyard roofs and the requalification of the Moyka riverbank.

11. The property therefore continues to face serious threats arising from large-scale urban development, inadequate heritage impact assessment procedures, and weaknesses in its legal and management framework. Although progress has been made, particularly through the strengthening of Saint Petersburg Law No. 820-7, these measures do not adequately protect the property against projects that may adversely affect its OUV. The implementation of the 2026 mission's recommendations, including stronger legal protections, the delineation of buffer zones, comprehensive site management, and the rigorous application of HIAs at earliest stages of project development, with project details submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to irreversible decisions, therefore remains essential.

12. In light of the conclusions of the 2025 ICOMOS Technical Reviews and the 2026 mission, the Committee may wish to consider that approval of the current Lakhta Centre 2 and Lakhta Centre 3 projects would constitute an ascertained danger under Paragraph 179 of the Operational Guidelines, as the towers would seriously deteriorate the architectural and urban coherence of the property and demonstrate that the existing protection and management system is unable to adequately safeguard its OUV.

***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.45***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decision **36 COM 7B.85**, adopted at its 36th session (Saint Petersburg, 2012),*

3. *Notes the conclusions of the 2019 and 2026 joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory missions that Lakhta Centre 1, an 87-storey, 462 m commercial office tower, has had a negative impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), and expresses its deep concern that the tower was constructed without the comprehensive Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) requested by the Committee and without the submission of the relevant project documentation for review prior to implementation;*

4. *Considers that, should the proposals to construct two additional towers with heights of 555 m and 703 m respectively, primarily within the boundary of the property at Lakhta, proceed, this would constitute an ascertained danger to the property's OUV, in accordance with Paragraph 179 of the* Operational Guidelines*, and justify the inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger; strongly urges the State Party not to approve either the Lakhta Centre 2 or the Lakhta Centre 3 proposals and, should further development at Lakhta be contemplated, requests the State Party to develop a new proposal for the land parcels through an iterative HIA process that places avoidance of negative impacts on the property's OUV at its centre, and to submit details of such a proposal, accompanied by the iterative HIA, to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse;*

5. *Further notes with concern that a number of projects with potential impacts on the property's OUV were initiated before notification to the World Heritage Centre in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the* Operational Guidelines *and before the completion of HIAs as required under Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines, thereby limiting opportunities for preventive review and, in several instances, resulting in adverse impacts on the property's OUV;*

6. *Also considers that:*

   a) *The Wedding Palace project, while aligned with the State Party's regulatory system, will have a negative impact on the property's OUV,*

   b) *The proposal to construct a contemporary 174.5 m bell tower for Smolny Cathedral based on an unexecuted eighteenth-century design, but not using traditional materials and not on its original site, would reduce the authenticity of the property,*

   c) *Planned urban development associated with the Planetograd project appears to encroach upon the 'Blockade Ring' component and risks diminishing its legibility within the landscape;*

7. *Also requests the State Party to ensure that:*

   a) *The Wedding Palace project and Smolny Cathedral bell tower project are abandoned,*

   b) *As a matter of urgency, the relationship between the Planetograd development and the 'Blockade Ring' component are clarified, detailed mapping and planning documentation is provided to the World Heritage Centre, and the project is revised as necessary to ensure that the legibility and integrity of this attribute are not adversely affected;*

8. *Further notes with concern the conclusions of the January 2026 joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory mission that substantial structural challenges remain in the protection and management of the property and its setting, and further requests the State Party to:*

   a) *Review the effectiveness of the existing legal and regulatory framework, including Saint Petersburg Law No. 820-7, in safeguarding the property's OUV, and submit the proposed amendments to Federal Law No. 73-FZ to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to their adoption,*

   b) *Strengthen the legal framework for the protection of World Heritage properties through amendments to relevant federal legislation, including the incorporation of key World Heritage concepts such as OUV, buffer zones and HIAs,*

   c) *Establish an effective management authority with responsibility for the property as a whole,*

   d) *Develop and adopt a comprehensive Management Plan for all components of the property,*

   e) *Develop proposals for buffer zones for all components of the property, based on comprehensive analysis of the property's protection requirements, its territory and its immediate and wider setting, and submit these to the World Heritage Centre in accordance with Paragraphs 163 and 164 of the Operational Guidelines,*

   f) *Ensure timely notification of proposed projects to the World Heritage Centre in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines,*

   g) *Ensure that HIAs are systematically undertaken prior to the approval of major development proposals, and their conclusions given a meaningful role in project design,*

   h) *Ensure that future revisions of the Master Plan for Saint Petersburg fully incorporate the conservation of the property's OUV and submit any revised plan to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies before its adoption;*

9. *Welcomes the reported successful restoration, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse projects, including at New Holland and Tsarskoye Selo, which demonstrate the State Party's capacity to deliver high-quality conservation work contributing to the property's authenticity, notes furthermore the project for the restoration and adaptive reuse of the Main Imperial Stables and the ongoing conservation work at the 'Physiologist I.P. Pavlov Scientific Campus', and encourages the State Party to ensure that:*

   a) *The Main Imperial Stables project is subject to a comprehensive HIA prior to its implementation, including for the proposed glazed courtyard roofs and the requalification of the Moyka riverbank,*

   b) *The conservation work at the 'Physiologist I.P. Pavlov Scientific Campus' is informed by scientific and technical studies;*

10. *Requests furthermore the State Party to develop a time-bound action plan for the implementation of the recommendations of the 2019 and 2026 joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory missions and to submit it as an annex to its next report on the state of conservation of the property;*

11. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2027**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 49th session.*

## 46. Ancient City of Tauric Chersonese and its Chora (Ukraine)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
2013

*Criteria*
(ii)(v)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
N/A

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1411/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 0
Total amount approved: USD 0
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1411/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
N/A

*Previous monitoring missions*
N/A

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*

- Erosion, in particular shore erosion
- Insensitive urban or infrastructure developments
- Critical state of conservation of the ruins in the city of Tauric Chersonese
- Lack of access due to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine) being temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1411/

*Current conservation issues*

1. Following the identification, through satellite imagery, of archaeological excavations and other recent activities that may pose a potential threat to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, the World Heritage Centre requested the State Party, on 6 January 2026, to submit a state of conservation report. The report was received on 30 January 2026 and is available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1411/documents/. It provides information on the state of conservation of the property since the adoption of Decision **40 COM 7B.62**, as summarised below:

    a) Since 2016, the serial property comprising the complete ancient polis of Tauric Chersonese and fragments of its chora, together with their buffer zones, located in the Crimean Peninsula and currently outside the effective control of the State Party, has been subject to extensive unauthorised excavations, large-scale construction activities and the removal of artefacts:

        i. In particular, between approximately 2018 and 2024, a large-scale project was undertaken in the buffer zone around the polis to create a “historical and archaeological park” (branded “New Chersonese”), which has significantly altered the landscape setting of the polis. This project resulted in the construction of several new museum buildings and visitor facilities, disturbing or destroying archaeological deposits up to 10 metres deep, including the remains of ancient temples, necropolises and other features that supported the property’s OUV;

        ii. In addition, the construction of an open-air theatre over underlying archaeological remains within the polis presents a serious risk of damage to subsurface cultural layers;

        iii. Numerous archaeological artefacts uncovered at the property – ranging from ancient Greek and Roman objects to Byzantine and medieval remains – have reportedly been

removed without authorisation and transferred to museums in the Russian Federation without the consent of the State Party, or otherwise lost due to inadequate control and management;

b) These unauthorised activities are reported to be in violation of Ukraine's national legislation on the protection of cultural heritage, as well as relevant international legal instruments, notably the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, which establishes the obligation of an occupying power to safeguard cultural heritage;

c) The ongoing occupation of the Crimean Peninsula has created a significant governance vacuum in relation to the property. Since 2014, the site has been administered by the occupying authorities outside the framework of the State Party's legal and heritage management system. The Ukrainian management authority has been displaced, and Ukrainian experts have not had physical access to the property for monitoring, maintenance or conservation activities;

d) The State Party has appealed to the international community to maintain and, where possible, increase support for monitoring, documentation and preparatory conservation planning activities for the property;

e) With regard to the joint Reactive Monitoring mission by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, as requested by the Committee, the State Party has indicated its continued commitment to hosting such a mission at the earliest feasible opportunity and to providing all necessary support.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM*

2. In 2016, in Decision **40 COM 7B.62**, the Committee urged all parties associated with the state of conservation of the property to refrain from any action that could cause irreversible damage to the property and to fulfil their obligations under international law by taking all possible measures to protect it. The Committee also invited the World Heritage Centre to use remote-sensing techniques to gather information on the state of conservation of the property. The analysis below draws on the results of the satellite monitoring initiative undertaken in this framework by UNESCO in cooperation with UNITAR/UNOSAT.

3. Satellite imagery indicates that archaeological activity has continued within and around the Ancient City of Tauric Chersonese component (the polis) since 2014, and that a number of new structures, including large-scale constructions, have been erected within both the property and its buffer zones:

a) The construction of a large-scale museum complex within the buffer zone immediately adjacent to the boundaries of the polis and completed by 2025, is of particular concern. This construction was preceded and accompanied by extensive archaeological excavations in the area, evident in satellite imagery from 2020 to 2023. These include trenching activities in which archaeological features appear to have been affected by rising groundwater in 2022, with features intermittently visible in very high-resolution imagery captured throughout that year;

b) Archaeological excavations have also been recorded within the polis itself, including in the areas surrounding the Kruse Basilica, the Cathedral, the Bell, and immediately north of the new museum complex;

c) New monuments have been constructed within the polis, including one located south of the Roman citadel, completed by August 2019, and another in the vicinity of the Cathedral, completed by 2024;

d) A number of temporary structures – including stages, screens, tiered seating and walkways – were installed within the Roman citadel from 2018 and removed by 2025, resulting in disturbance to at least the upper soil layers of the polis;

e) Within the buffer zones surrounding the chora sites, a series of construction projects has also been recorded with the potential to affect buried archaeological deposits, particularly at chora sites not currently included within the property. These include: (i) the construction, between 2017 and 2021, of a large monument (with a footprint of approximately 580 m²) across Karantiynna Bay from the ancient city, identified in Google Earth as the "Monument to

Reconciliation"; (ii) the ongoing construction of a gas pipeline to the south of this monument; and (iii) the construction of two large residential complexes within the buffer zones of the components located in Yukharina and Streletskaya Gully, as well as new high-rise buildings on the Mayachny Peninsula.

4. The threats arising from extensive archaeological excavations within the archaeological remains of the polis and from new construction activities, undertaken without the authorisation of the competent Ukrainian authorities, have resulted in a significant loss of authenticity and integrity and constitute an ascertained danger to the property.

5. Furthermore, the construction of a museum near the polis within the buffer zone, together with new large-scale structures around the chora sites within their buffer zones, poses an additional threat to the setting of the property. At the time of inscription, the State Party indicated that 16 further chora sites might be considered for potential extension of the property. As highlighted in the property's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, "the impact of urban development on the chora setting is significant and the integrity of the wider landscape is fragile and requires decisive and consistent protection and planning mechanisms to prevent further negative impacts by insensitive urban or infrastructure developments".

6. Since 2014, at the request of Member States, the UNESCO Secretariat has regularly reported to the Executive Board on developments within UNESCO's fields of competence in Crimea. Joint monitoring efforts undertaken by UNESCO and ICOMOS within this framework have provided a basis for assessing factors reported to be affecting the property. As reflected in the most recent Executive Board document, *Follow-up of the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine)* (222 EX/4.I.I, 1 September 2025), extensive archaeological excavations, large-scale construction activities and the removal of cultural objects have continued to be reported. The report further refers to information indicating that, in 2024, more than 12 million archaeological objects were excavated from the Chersonese site and that cultural objects have been transferred to institutions in the Russian Federation without the authorisation of the competent Ukrainian authorities. The scale, intensity and cumulative nature of the reported interventions raise serious concerns regarding potentially irreversible impacts on the integrity and authenticity of the property and, consequently, on its OUV.

7. In this context, and particularly in the absence of adequate impact assessment, scientific oversight and effective conservation control measures, the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS consider that these archaeological excavations and developments pose serious threats to the property's authenticity and integrity, as well as to its setting. These actions are therefore considered to constitute an ascertained danger in accordance with Paragraph 179 of the Operational Guidelines.

8. In addition to the threats outlined above, the fact that the State Party does not have access to the property and is therefore unable to ensure its protection, conservation and effective management in accordance with the Operational Guidelines (Paragraphs 96-98), which require adequate and functioning management systems and legal protection, is also considered to constitute a potential danger in accordance with Paragraph 179 of the Operational Guidelines.

9. In light of the above, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies consider that the property is confronted with both ascertained and potential danger, as defined under Paragraph 179 of the Operational Guidelines.

10. In accordance with Article 11(4) of the World Heritage Convention and Paragraphs 177 to 179 of the Operational Guidelines, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies consider that a broad mobilisation of international cooperation and support is required for the conservation of the property and the preservation of its OUV, and therefore recommend that the Committee consider the inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.46***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

*1. Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decision **40 COM 7B.62,** adopted at its 40th session (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016),*

3. *Recalls its invitation to the World Heritage Centre to use remote sensing techniques to gather information on the state of conservation of the property, welcomes UNESCO's partnership with UNITAR/UNOSAT in this regard, invites the World Heritage Centre to continue such monitoring activities, and calls for strengthened financial support to sustain these efforts, in particular through contributions to the World Heritage Fund, as well as through voluntary contributions by Member States and partners;*

4. *Takes note with utmost concern of the findings of satellite monitoring since 2014, indicating that the property is under threat as a result of a significant loss of authenticity and integrity arising from new construction and associated extensive archaeological excavations, and that the property's setting has also been compromised by large-scale development and archaeological activities;*

5. *Also notes with utmost concern that the State Party does not currently have access to the property and is therefore unable to ensure its protection, conservation or effective management in accordance with Paragraphs 96-98 of the Operational Guidelines;*

6. *Considers that the property is confronted with both ascertained and potential danger, as defined under Paragraph 179 of the Operational Guidelines;*

7. ***Decides, in conformity with Article 11.4 of the Convention and Paragraphs 177 to 179 of the Operational Guidelines, to inscribe Ancient City of Tauric Chersonese and its Chora (Ukraine) on the List of World Heritage in Danger;***

8. *Requests the State Party, when circumstances permit, to prepare, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, a proposal for a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR), together with a set of corrective measures and a timeframe for their implementation, for adoption by the Committee at a subsequent session;*

9. *Urges all parties currently associated with the state of conservation of the property to refrain from any action that would cause further irreversible direct or indirect damages to the property, its buffer zone and its wider setting, as well as to sites on Ukraine's Tentative List also located in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine), temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation, namely 'Bagçesaray Palace of the Crimean Khans and the Historical surroundings of Crimean Khans' capital in Bakhchysarai', 'Cultural Landscape of 'Cave Towns' of the Crimean Gothia', 'Astronomical Observatories of Ukraine' (one of the four components of which is located in Crimea: Crimean Astrophysical Observatory), and 'Complex of the Sudak Fortress Monuments of the 6th - 16th c. and Trading Posts and Fortifications on Genoese Trade Routes. From the Mediterranean to the Black Sea', and, as relevant, to fulfil their obligations under international law by taking all possible measures to protect the property;*

10. *Also calls upon the international community to strengthen cooperation in preventing the illicit trafficking of cultural property originating from the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine);*

11. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2027**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 49th session.*

# MIXED PROPERTIES

## EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

### 62. Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region (Albania, North Macedonia)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
1979

*Criteria*
(i)(iii)(iv)(vii)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
N/A

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/99/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 3 (from 1986-2021)
Total amount approved: USD 86,720
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/99/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
'Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region', funded by the European Union (EU) for an amount of US$1,394,037 (2014-2018) and co-financed by the Republic of Albania through a UNESCO Funds-in-Trust project (2015-2018) of an amount of US$239,887.
UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, Venice: US$20 000 in 2016. Since 2023, US$142,601 from Italy for supporting North Macedonia for the improved protection of the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region.

*Previous monitoring missions*
September 1998: Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN mission; December 2013: Joint ICOMOS/UNESCO Advisory mission; April 2017: Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission; December 2019: Joint ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission; January 2020: Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission; April 2022: ICOMOS Advisory mission; March 2024: Joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*
- Management systems/ management plan
- Buildings and development
- Ground transport infrastructure
- Major visitor accommodation and associated infrastructure (proposed Galičica Ski Centre)
- Impacts of tourism / visitor / recreation

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/99/

*Current conservation issues*

1. On 30 January 2026, the States Parties submitted a joint state of conservation report, which is available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/99/documents/.

2. Progress on a number of conservation issues previously addressed by the Committee is presented in the report, as follows:

a) Transboundary cooperation continues, including the publication of spatial data of the property boundaries on the UNESCO geospatial platform, two coordination meetings, cooperation between institutions at regional level (e.g. fisheries management, preparation of corrective measures); Albania, in coordination with North Macedonia, is exploring opportunities with international partners to support the preparation of a comprehensive Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA);

b) Tourism-related pressures are reported across the property as a whole, notably through urbanisation and development affecting sensitive areas, while responses differ between the two States Parties: in North Macedonia, through the regulation of visitation under the Galičica National Park Visitor Management Plan (VMP); and in Albania, through strengthening protection and conservation action in the most sensitive areas and undertaking awareness-raising activities to reinforce understanding of the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);

c) In North Macedonia:

   i. In 2025, several decisions were adopted to implement priority measures under the Strategic Recovery Plan (SRP), including the establishment of Centralised Crisis Coordination Headquarters, operational since January 2026 and led by the Minister of Culture and Tourism;

   ii. Draft laws to designate Lake Ohrid as a Natural Monument, proclaim Studenčišča Marsh as a Nature Park, regulate the management of the property, and revise the 'Proclamation of the Old City Core of Ohrid as Cultural Heritage of Particular Importance', are underway;

   iii. A two-year moratorium on Protective-Conservation Conditions (ZKU) for construction and alterations has been introduced pending adoption of 19 new Detailed Urban Plans (DUPs); a National Strategy for the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage (2025-2029) is under preparation;

   iv. A decision has been issued to undertake the SEA of the Road Corridor VIII section Trebenishta-Struga-Frangovo within the property; pre-feasibility activities for Railway Corridor VIII, including preparation of an SEA and/or Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), are expected to begin in 2026 and take approximately 15 months;

   v. The Directorate for the Protection of Cultural Heritage processed 12 legalisation applications and initiated procurement for the demolition of illegal structures; legalisation requests are reviewed jointly with the local Institute based on compliance with heritage protection criteria;

   vi. In 2026, several administrative acts were expected to be implemented for the removal of illegal structures in the Municipality of Ohrid; the Municipality has initiated procedures to align significant parts of the General Urban Plan (GUP) with the Law on Urban Planning and the Management Plan (2020–2029) (MP); the Municipality of Debrca has prepared an inventory of illegal structures and initiated urbanisation of settlements located within the property; in November 2025, a construction suspension order was issued for Hotel Lagadin (Pestani);

   vii. To safeguard the Ohrid Region's OUV, a multi-layered, inter-institutional review process applies to all proposals: investors must first obtain a conservation opinion from the NI Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments and Museum – Ohrid, reviewed by the Ohrid Region Management Commission and the Directorate for Protection of Cultural Heritage to establish mandatory protection conditions; projects then undergo strict compliance checks to secure final Conservation Approval and construction permits from the competent authorities;

   viii. Conservation and restoration of cultural monuments and churches continued throughout 2025;

   ix. Studenčišča Marsh is considered legally protected under the GUP, and no interventions including urbanisation are foreseen within the MP; the 'Gorica 3' complex was approved in 2012; in 2025, the Hydrobiological Institute continued activities including artificial spawning and monitoring of Ohrid trout, removal of fishing gear waste, preparation of a limnological study of Lake Ohrid, and will host a Joint Committee on Fisheries;

x. Amendments to the zoning system of Galičica National Park (GNP), following the mid-term review of the 2021-2030 MP, would designate 75% of the area as a “natural zone” (strict protection and active management); an SEA and public consultation of the revised MP are foreseen in 2026 prior to its adoption; a VMP (2026-2030) has been prepared; rangers will receive training, while integrated management and enforcement remain constrained by overlapping legislation and limited funding; a regulation on off-road vehicle use has been prepared, with plans to restrict access allowing only electric vehicles;

xi. The diversion of the Sateska River to its original riverbed has been completed, with management, operational protocols and equipment upgrades scheduled for 2026; water levels in Lake Ohrid and discharge into the river continue to be monitored and regulated, with plans to modernise the regulation structure; declining precipitation continues to contribute to reduced water levels in the lake and its tributaries;

xii. Multiple activities are underway, including maintenance and upgrading of wastewater systems; construction of a collector system in the Municipality of Struga, and plans for a new municipal waste landfill and transfer station; the development and implementation of corrective measures are framed under the SRP and its Action Plan;

d) In Albania:

i. The SRP has not yet attained formal status as requested by the Committee, but is applied in practice to plan, prioritise and coordinate implementation;

ii. The designation of Lin village as an Urban Architectural Ensemble, including a buffer zone covering the Lin Peninsula, is nearing finalisation and is complemented by the declaration of an underwater archaeological zone of the pile dwelling settlement;

iii. The wastewater project at Udënisht has commenced, while financing for Çërravë and Dardhas remains pending; gaps persist, and efforts to focus on implementation, funding mobilisation and interim measures;

iv. Conservation of the remains of the Lin Paleo Christian Church has commenced;

v. A time-bound set of corrective measures has been prepared for consultation and is annexed to the report;

vi. The ‘Rehabilitation of the Railway Corridor VIII Section R Rrogozhinë – Pogradec’ has resumed at the detailed design stage (planned duration 21 months); in light of potential impacts on the OUV, the government is coordinating with relevant authorities to ensure no irreversible decisions are taken without prior assessment and review in line with World Heritage requirements, including the 2024 mission and *Guidance and Toolkit*;

vii. Eight projects in the buffer zone are under consideration, with permits issued but decisions pending; potential impacts on OUV will be assessed and the World Heritage Centre informed.

*3.* Between January and March 2026, several meetings took place at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris between different levels of political and institutional representation of the State Party of North Macedonia and UNESCO; on one occasion, the State Party of Albania was represented by its Delegation in Paris.

4. On 29 September 2025, the World Heritage Centre transmitted third-party information to the State Party of North Macedonia concerning the construction of six houses in the Daljan area of Ohrid, reportedly without the required permits. Additional information was also conveyed regarding the composition of the Management Commission, noting the absence of mandatory representatives from the environmental NGO sector and academic biodiversity experts, that only one meeting had been held in the past year, and that it was not open to the public. Potential risks linked to proposed amendments to the Law on Managing the Property that could affect effective management were also highlighted.

*5.* On 2 February 2026, the World Heritage Centre transmitted to the State Party of Albania third-party information concerning a proposed large-scale development project in the city of Pogradec, within the former Turizmi/Oktapodi area on the shore of Lake Ohrid. The project reportedly includes residential and hotel buildings of up to 27 storeys, as well as a marina and shoreline modifications, with potential adverse impacts on the lake’s fragile ecosystem, visual integrity,

historic urban landscape, and the longstanding cultural relationship between the city and the lake. The recommendations of the 2024 joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission, which noted that confirmation of such a proposal could further exacerbate the property's already highly vulnerable conditions and could constitute a danger in accordance with Article 11.4 of the World Heritage Convention and Paragraphs 179 and 180 of its Operational Guidelines were reiterated.

*6.* On 13 February 2026, the World Heritage Centre wrote to the States Parties of Albania and North Macedonia, noting that several elements requested in Decision **47 COM 7B.54** remained outstanding and inviting the submission of additional information by 27 February 2026. The State Party of North Macedonia subsequently provided additional information on 27 February, 6 and 9 March 2026, including English translations of draft amendments to the Law on the Old City Core of Ohrid, a note from the Municipality of Struga on urban planning and illegal constructions, and information concerning the SEA process and Hotel Lagadin, located within the property and approximately 50 metres from the lakeshore.

*7.* On 16 February 2026, the World Heritage Centre transmitted further third-party information to the State Party of North Macedonia concerning alleged violations of national legislation related to the construction of the Hotel Lagadin. Concerns regarding this development had previously been raised by the 2020 and 2024 Reactive Monitoring missions, which recommended its demolition.

*8.* On 31 March 2026, additional information from third parties was transmitted regarding ground instability and landslides in the Municipality of Ohrid, reportedly associated with archaeological excavations – allegedly carried out under the auspices of UNESCO – and neighbouring construction works. The information indicated terrain collapse near a residential structure, raising concerns for human safety and property, and suggested possible links to ongoing works in the area.

9. On 17 April 2026, the State Party of North Macedonia submitted to the World Heritage Centre the feasibility study for planning the coastal zone of Lake Ohrid for review by the Advisory Bodies.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies*

10. Various initiatives are reported to address ongoing concerns; however, the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies consider that overall progress in implementing previous Committee decisions and mission recommendations remains limited, leaving the property in a highly vulnerable state.

11. While the Committee has repeatedly requested the States Parties, since 2021, to reinforce transboundary dialogue and coordination at both high institutional and operational levels to ensure the effective and sustainable management of the property, progress remains limited and intermittent, and falls short of the structural changes required. The establishment of a new coordination body in North Macedonia is noted; however, no equivalent strengthened arrangement has been reported in Albania, where the SRP has yet to be formalised as requested, despite being applied in practice. It is therefore recommended that the Committee reiterate this request, in order to ensure clear and reinforced governance, and urge the States Parties to strengthen transboundary dialogue at all levels to enable the timely implementation of urgent measures to address threats to the OUV and improve the overall state of conservation and long-term management of the property.

12. It is regrettable that no concrete progress has been made in undertaking the SEA, requested since 2024, to comprehensively assess the cumulative impacts of infrastructure and development plans, as well as other major projects, on the property's OUV. The Centre and the Advisory Bodies remain available to support the States Parties, and it is recommended that the Committee reiterate the need to urgently prepare such an SEA, including through the prompt definition of its scope and expected outputs, in line with the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*, and to submit it to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies.

13. The preparation of an SEA for the Road Corridor VIII, Trebenishta-Struga-Frangovo section, is welcomed, as is the intention to conduct an SEA/EIA for the Railway Corridor VIII in 2026. However, as the detailed design phase of the railway in Albania has resumed along the initially proposed corridor, it remains essential that routing be reconsidered bilaterally to avoid adverse impacts on the property's OUV. The Committee may wish to request the States Parties to submit

to the World Heritage Centre, for review by the Advisory Bodies, the pre-feasibility study for alternative routing, together with detailed studies and the SEA for the Corridor VIII, prior to any decisions that may be difficult to reverse, and to defer implementation until such review is completed.

14. While some structural measures are underway, overall progress in waste and wastewater management remains limited, and pollution continues to affect the lake ecosystem. Key infrastructure remains delayed, with approved wastewater system upgrades in parts of Albania pending funding, and significant delays reported in the construction of the collector system in the Municipality of Struga (North Macedonia). The States Parties should be requested to accelerate the implementation of integrated waste and wastewater management systems, prioritise securing funding for approved projects, and expedite completion of ongoing collector and landfill infrastructure to mitigate ongoing pollution risks to the lake ecosystem.

15. It is noted that the Sateska River diversion has been completed, with management, operational protocols, and related equipment scheduled for 2026, to be finalised in line with the mission recommendations. Monitoring and regulation of water levels in Lake Ohrid and discharge into the river should continue.

16. In North Macedonia, efforts to revise legislative frameworks, prepare a new strategic policy document and establish a new organisational structure are welcome; however, implementation remains slow. Key legislative instruments for the protection of the property, expected since 2021, including the designation of Lake Ohrid as a Monument of Nature and Studenčišča Marsh as a Nature Park, remain pending. Other legal revisions have only recently begun, and the National Strategy for the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage is still under preparation, with no clear timeframe. The Committee may wish to request the State Party to expedite the adoption and implementation of these instruments to ensure adequate protection of the property's OUV.

17. Progress in addressing the impacts of illegal construction remains limited, and it remains unclear whether any such structures were removed during the reporting period. Efforts by the Municipality of Ohrid to align the GUP with the Law on Urban Planning and the Management Plan (2020–2029) are welcomed; however, the case of the Lagadin Hotel – initially considered lawful but subsequently found to be non-compliant – highlights persistent weaknesses in enforcement. While revisions to the legal framework for the Ohrid Old City Core are underway, no progress has been reported in the preparation of the long-awaited Detailed Urban Plans (DUPs) for the 19 designated urban complexes, despite the introduction of a moratorium on Protective-Conservation Conditions. The Feasibility Study for the planning of the coastal zone of Lake Ohrid (North Macedonia) has been submitted for review, as requested by the Committee. The Committee may wish to reiterate its request to suspend amendments to the DUPs and the approval of Local Development Plans outside settlements until the SEA demonstrates that there will be no adverse effects on the attributes underpinning the property's OUV, to expedite the preparation of GUPs and spatial planning instruments fully aligned with the property's OUV, and to undertake a systematic assessment of illegal constructions, leading to decisions on their removal or on measures to mitigate their impacts.

18. While noting that the designation of Studenčišča Marsh as a Nature Park is underway and that urbanisation is not permitted within the marsh, it is regrettable that the construction of the 'Gorica 3' complex is proceeding, given its scale and potential negative impacts on the property's OUV. The Committee may wish to request the State Party of North Macedonia to further strengthen the conservation of Studenčišča Marsh, including by halting developments with adverse impacts and to prioritise the adoption of the laws proclaiming Studenčišča Marsh as a Nature Park and Lake Ohrid as a Natural Monument.

19. Ongoing activities of the Hydrobiological Institute related to fisheries management, including artificial spawning and monitoring of Ohrid trout, removal of fishing gear waste, and a limnological study of Lake Ohrid, are noted positively and should continue.

20. Progress regarding the GNP is noted positively. The proposed designation of 75% of the area as a strict protection (and active management) zone under the revised MP aligns with previous Committee requests. The planned strategic assessment of the revised MP in 2026 provides an opportunity to inform its finalisation and should be completed in line with these requests. The VMP and the stricter regulation of off-road vehicle use are also welcomed. While training to strengthen ranger authority and enforcement capacity is planned, significant constraints persist. In particular, overlaps and inconsistencies between the Law on Nature Protection and sectoral legislation

continue to hinder integrated management, alongside persistent limitations in staffing and financial resources, which require further attention.

21. In Albania, the initiation of conservation works at the Lin Paleo Christian Church is welcomed, as is the ongoing strengthening of legal protection for Lin and its Peninsula, although this has yet to be finalised. The response to development pressures remains insufficient, with no reported progress on key measures, including the downsizing of the five-storey development in Tushemisht, the suspension of the Drilon Tushemisht Waterscape, the Pogradec bypass road, and the revision of the Pogradec Local General Plan in ecologically sensitive areas. The Committee may wish to reiterate its request that the State Party urgently address these pressures, amend relevant urban planning instruments, and enforce regulatory measures to safeguard the property's OUV.

22. Tourism pressures are primarily reflected through development and urbanisation in sensitive areas, particularly in Albania, where tourism-related projects and planning provisions lack adequate impact assessment and control. While some measures aim to regulate visitation in North Macedonia, implementation remains uneven and insufficient to address cumulative impacts on OUV.

23. The need to address the above concerns is reflected in the corrective measures proposed by Albania, including the establishment of a transboundary committee and working group, formalisation of the SRP, the introduction of an impact assessment "gateway" (screening) mechanism to address cumulative effects arising from phased approvals, increased staffing capacity, the preparation of an SEA to assess cumulative impacts, and measures addressing infrastructure, pollution and wastewater management. Whilst these measures are relevant to addressing the identified pressures, they should inform the development of a single, jointly agreed set of corrective measures for the transboundary property as a whole. In particular, the proposed SEA should address cumulative pressures across the entire property, rather than only in Albania.

24. In conclusion, it is recalled that in 2025, the Committee noted with utmost concern that cumulative and ongoing impacts had caused serious deterioration of the key attributes conveying the property's OUV, resulting in irreversible degradation unless decisive action was taken, and requested the urgent implementation of all necessary corrective measures. Whilst recent reporting indicates some progress, implementation of key long-standing recommendations related to transboundary governance, tourism-related development, the alignment of spatial planning instruments, and transport infrastructure remains limited or pending.

25. It is further recalled that, in its Decisions of 2021, 2023, 2024 and 2025, the Committee has consistently recognised the property's highly vulnerable condition, the need for broad mobilisation to preserve its OUV, and the possibility that it may warrant inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger. In light of the limited progress in addressing the identified and recurring threats, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies consider that the conditions for such inscription, in accordance with Paragraphs 179 and 180 of the Operational Guidelines, continue to be met, and that inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger could therefore contribute to stronger mobilisation and more decisive action to halt and reverse the property's ongoing degradation. The corrective measures proposed by Albania may inform the development of a Desired State of Conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR); however, these would need to be further consolidated and jointly agreed by both States Parties at the transboundary level to ensure their effective and coordinated implementation.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.62***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decisions **40 COM 7B.68**, **41 COM 7B.34**, **43 COM 7B.36**, **44 COM 7B.77**, **45 COM 7B.104**, **46 COM 7B.44**, and **47 COM 7B.54**, adopted at its 40th (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016), 41st (Krakow, 2017), 43rd (Baku, 2019), extended 44th*

*(Fuzhou/online, 2021), extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023), 46th (New Delhi, 2024), and 47th (UNESCO, 2025) sessions respectively,*

3. *Takes note of the progress reported by the States Parties of Albania and North Macedonia, including advances in legislative initiatives in North Macedonia, preparation of corrective measures in Albania, measures to improve waste and water management and continued scientific monitoring, notably in fisheries management in North Macedonia;*

4. *Notes with utmost concern that overall progress in addressing the ongoing degradation of attributes conveying the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property remains limited, and reiterates its request to the States Parties to implement the outstanding recommendations of the 2017, 2020 and 2024 Reactive Monitoring missions;*

5. *Urges the States Parties to further reinforce transboundary dialogue and coordination at both high institutional and operational levels, including with regard to the consideration of alternative routing options for Corridor VIII;*

6. *Notes with concern the continued delays in preparing the pre-feasibility study for the alternative route of the Railway Corridor VIII, as well as the associated studies and impact assessments, and invites the States Parties to submit these to the World Heritage Centre for review prior to any decisions that may be difficult to reverse, and to refrain from implementing the project until such review has been completed;*

7. *Welcomes the establishment of a coordination body in North Macedonia, and also reiterates its request to Albania to upgrade the status of the Strategic Recovery Plan (SRP), including through strengthened governance arrangements, and to accelerate the implementation of urgent measures to address existing threats to the OUV;*

8. *Regrets the absence of progress in preparing a comprehensive Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to assess cumulative impacts on the property's OUV of all infrastructure and development plans, and again reiterates its request to the States Parties to urgently undertake such an SEA, and to submit it to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;*

9. *Also welcomes the initiation of conservation works at the Lin Paleo Christian Church and efforts to strengthen the protection of Lin and its Peninsula, but regrets the insufficient response to ongoing development pressures, including tourism-related developments, and the lack of progress in implementing previous requests to revise and downscale the Tushemisht development, amend the Pogradec General Local Plan to exclude urbanisation in ecologically sensitive areas, including between Tushemisht and Drilon Springs and on Lin Peninsula, and to halt further development of the Drilon–Tushemisht Waterscape project and the Pogradec bypass road pending the completion and submission of impact assessments, including cumulative impacts, in line with the Guidance and Toolkit; reiterates its requests to the State Party of Albania in this regard;*

10. *Requests the State Party of North Macedonia, in line with its previous requests, to:*

    a) *Expedite the assessment of the impacts of illegal constructions, based on clear criteria, and implement remedial measures, including removal where appropriate,*

    b) *Suspend amendments to Detailed Urban Plans and approval of Local Development Plans outside settlements until the SEA demonstrates no adverse effects on the attributes underpinning the property's OUV,*

    c) *urgently advance the preparation of General Urban Plans for Ohrid and Struga, as well as spatial planning instruments for non-built-up areas, ensuring full alignment*

*with the property's OUV, in parallel with the comprehensive SEA and taking into account its findings;*

11. *Takes note that a draft law to designate Studenčišča Marsh as a Nature Park is under preparation and that urbanisation is not permitted within the marsh; however, also regrets the continuation of the 'Gorica 3' complex, given its scale and potential negative impacts on the OUV, and furthermore reiterates its request to the State Party of North Macedonia to halt such development activities pending the completion and submission of SEA and project-specific impact assessments;*

12. *Further welcomes efforts by the State Party of North Macedonia to strengthen legislative frameworks and prepare a new strategic policy document, and also urges the State Party to expedite the adoption of key legal instruments, including the designation of Lake Ohrid as a natural monument and Studenčišča Marsh as a Nature Park;*

13. *Notes ongoing wastewater infrastructure upgrades and monitoring efforts by both States Parties, however, expresses concern at the slow pace of implementation, and also requests the States Parties to accelerate integrated waste and wastewater management, prioritise funding for approved projects, and expedite completion of key infrastructure to address pollution affecting the lake ecosystem;*

14. *Notes with appreciation progress regarding Galičica National Park (GNP), including proposed zoning revisions, visitor management planning and measures to regulate off-road vehicle use; however, notes with concern that inconsistencies arising from overlapping legislation and limited enforcement capacity continue to constrain effective management, and requests furthermore the State Party of North Macedonia to:*

    a) *Complete the revision of the zoning system to allow natural processes to occur across 75% of the park,*

    b) *Ensure effective implementation of the visitor management plan to ensure tourism in GNP is sustainable and in line with the protection of the OUV,*

    c) *Strengthen ranger authority and enforcement capacity,*

    d) *Enforce strict regulation of off-road vehicle use and progressively phase out such activities;*

15. *Acknowledges the completion of the Sateska River redirection, and urges furthermore the State Party of North Macedonia to finalise the related operational and management arrangements to ensure its effective operation;*

16. *Also notes with utmost concern that, despite some progress, overall implementation of corrective measures, recommendations of the 2020 and 2024 missions and the Strategic Recovery Plan remains insufficient, and that cumulative and ongoing impacts arising from weak transboundary governance, the absence of a comprehensive SEA, unresolved urban planning and illegal construction, continued development pressures, and delays in wastewater and waste management are causing serious deterioration of the property's OUV;*

17. *Recalls that, in its Decisions **45 COM 7B.104** (2023), **46 COM 7B.44** (2024) and **47 COM 7B.54** (2025), the Committee has repeatedly noted the severe and multiple threats affecting the property, and that, in 2025 it considered that the conditions for the property's inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger had been met in accordance with paragraphs 179-180 of the Operational Guidelines, and reiterates the need for the States Parties to take urgent and sustained action to address the factors affecting its OUV;*

18. ***Decides* to inscribe the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region (Albania, North Macedonia) on the List of World Heritage in Danger;**

19. *Further requests the States Parties, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, to develop a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger and a single set of joint corrective measures for the transboundary property, including a clear timeframe for their implementation, based on the recommendations of the 2020 and 2024 missions and the SRP, and building on the corrective measures developed by the State Party of Albania, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 49th session in 2027;*

20. *Finally requests the States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2027**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 49th session.*

## 63. Laponian Area (Sweden)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
1996

*Criteria*
(iii)(v)(vii)(viii)(ix)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
N/A

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/774/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 0
Total amount approved: USD 0
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/774/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
N/A

*Previous monitoring missions*
2024 Joint World Heritage/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*
- Mining
- Identity, social cohesion, changes in local population and community
- Management systems/management plan
- Increasing impacts of climate change

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/774/

*Current conservation issues*

1. On 10 February 2026, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report, which is available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/774/documents/.

2. Progress on a number of conservation issues addressed by the Committee at its previous sessions is presented as follows:

a) Regarding the exploitation concession for iron mining in the Kallak/Gállok area, approximately 35 km south-west of the property, granted in 2022 and entering into legal force in 2024, mining operations remain subject to an environmental permit, including 12 conditions, notably a requirement for the company to engage with authorities to ensure the Laponian Area as a World Heritage property is taken into account. No permit application has been submitted to date. Since the proponent retains the right, under national law, to submit such an application, no decision regarding the permit can be taken by the government at this stage;

b) A joint working group with representatives of the Swedish National Heritage Board (SNHB) and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) has been established to analyse Committee decisions and the recommendations of the 2024 Reactive Monitoring mission and to propose follow-up actions, including the requested development of a Sustainability Development Strategy and a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to examine cumulative impacts arising from multiple development projects within and around the property and its setting, as well as matters relating to legal protection, governance arrangements and revision of the Management Plan, and to coordinate consultations with relevant authorities and Sámi representative bodies;

c) The World Heritage Impact Assessment (WHIA), initiated by the proponent (Jokkmokk Iron Mines AB) following consultations in October 2024, is reported to be under preparation in accordance with the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context* (Guidance and Toolkit), and informed by a Reindeer Herding Analysis undertaken in collaboration with Sámi Indigenous Peoples, together with ongoing work on a Reindeer and Wildlife Steering Plan. The WHIA is expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2026 and will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to any decision on an environmental permit;

d) It is stated that a buffer zone was not deemed necessary at the time of nomination to protect the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), and that existing protection measures cover almost the entire surrounding area of the property;

e) Regarding free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), the Act on consultation on issues concerning the Sámi (2022:66), which entered into force in 2022, establishes specific consultation provisions concerning Sámi rights to influence decision-making processes on matters affecting Sámi communities, including major infrastructure and industrial projects;

f) The Swedish Agency for Public Management (SAPM) is reviewing existing management arrangements for the property to ensure its sustainable, efficient and long-term conservation, and issued a report on management mechanisms in 2025, which is undergoing consultation. A review of the current legal protection is pending;

g) In 2025, SAPM recommended the establishment of a permanent legal basis for Laponiatjuottjudus, the property's management body, which will undertake a substantial revision of the Management Plan in 2026. The revision will integrate the recommendations of SAPM and UNESCO, and the draft will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;

h) Climate change continues to negatively affect the property, with rising temperatures and altered precipitation patterns affecting sensitive ecosystems. Observed effects include the northward expansion of tree lines, changes in alpine vegetation, increased frequency of extreme weather events, glacial melting, and altered snow conditions, affecting flora, fauna and traditional Sámi reindeer husbandry, particularly with regard to access to winter grazing areas and food resources;

i) Under the exploration permit granted in 2024, test drilling at Allivaara (approximately 2,330 hectares in the immediate vicinity of the property) continues, and, should exploration confirm viable mineral deposits, subsequent steps would require an application for an exploitation concession, subject to legal and environmental assessment procedures;

j) Planned reinforcement of the national electricity transmission grid between Gällivare and Kiruna includes a proposed power line between Porjusberget and Vitafors, which would cross the Stubba Nature Reserve within the property. A concession granted in June 2025 was appealed and the matter remains under preparation, while a second line (between Njuollojárvi and Messaure) remains at an early planning stage;

3. In a letter dated March 2026, the State Party informed the World Heritage Centre that, in February 2026, the Swedish Energy Markets Inspectorate (SEMI) granted permission to extend the national electricity transmission grid between Porjusberget and Naalojärvi (Vitåfors) within the property. This decision was appealed in March 2026 and has not yet gained legal force. It follows an earlier concession granted in July 2025, which had been appealed in September 2025 by an affected property owner.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies*

4. The proposed Kallak mining project in the vicinity of the property, combined with increasing development pressures within and around its boundaries, continues to pose a significant threat to the property's OUV.

5. Regarding the proposed Kallak mine, it is noted that the WHIA initiated by Jokkmokk Iron Mines AB is expected to be finalised in 2026, in accordance with the *Guidance and Toolkit*, informed by additional studies related to reindeer herding, and submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to any decision on the environmental permit required for mining to proceed. However, recalling the findings of the 2024 Reactive Monitoring mission and previous Committee decisions, it remains of serious concern that the proposed project, located within a critical reindeer migration corridor, could significantly disrupt reindeer transhumance, with potentially irreversible impacts on the ecological and cultural connectivity underpinning the property's OUV. Concerns therefore persist that the proposed mitigation measures would be insufficient to avoid such impacts and could threaten the long-term sustainability of Sámi reindeer herding, a living cultural practice that underpins the property's OUV. Whilst noting that the final impact assessment will be examined by the competent authorities in line with national planning requirements, it is recommended, in light of the above concerns, that the Committee reiterate its request to the State Party not to grant the environmental permit required for mining operations to proceed.

6. It is noted that the 2022 Act on consultation on issues concerning the Sámi will apply to future decision-making processes, including environmental permitting and development proposals. In this regard, it is important that the Committee reiterates its request that any further consideration of mining-related permits ensures that consultation and decision-making processes fully respect the principle of FPIC, in accordance with international norms and standards.

7. The ongoing test drilling at Allivaara raises serious concerns regarding the potential impacts of future mining activities in the immediate vicinity of the property on the OUV, and whether adequate consideration of OUV is being applied at the exploration stage. A comprehensive impact assessment, in line with the *Guidance and Toolkit*, will be required prior to any consideration of approval of mining operations, in order to assess potential impacts on the property's OUV.

8. Several development and infrastructure projects are at different stages of planning and approval within the immediate and wider setting of the property. These include the electricity transmission lines between Porjusberget and Naalojärvi, and between Naalojärvi and Messaure, which risk further disruption to reindeer husbandry practices and adverse impacts on the property's OUV. This underlines the urgent need for the State Party to undertake the previously requested SEA, in order to assess the cumulative impacts of all existing and planned major development projects and to establish parameters for future development planning. The absence of any reported concrete steps towards undertaking the SEA remains a matter of concern.

9. The reported impacts of climate change on alpine and subarctic ecosystems are of concern, given their implications for biodiversity and Sámi reindeer husbandry. Continued monitoring and adaptation efforts therefore remain important to strengthen the resilience of the property to ongoing climate change.

10. It is essential that all proposed projects within the property or its wider setting be subject to impact assessments carried out in accordance with the *Guidance and Toolkit*, based on a clear identification of the attributes underpinning the property's OUV, and that these assessments be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to any decisions that may be difficult to reverse.

11. Progress in establishing a dedicated working group to address the Committee and Mission recommendations, including consideration of a Sustainable Development Strategy for the

property, is welcomed. However, it remains unclear how meaningful and systematic participation of Sámi Indigenous Peoples is ensured within this process.

12. It is noted that the government review of current management arrangements highlights the need to establish a permanent legal basis for Laponiatjuottjudus to ensure the continued integrated management of the property's cultural and natural values of Indigenous Peoples, in line with the 2024 Reactive Monitoring mission recommendations. The revision of the Management Plan, requested by the Committee, represents an opportunity to better integrate legal protection regimes for international designations and to clearly define the attributes underpinning the property's OUV. The State Party is requested to submit the revised draft Management Plan to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to its adoption.

13. Whilst acknowledging the State Party's position that a buffer zone is not considered necessary, given the level of protection provided through existing mechanisms, the Committee's previous conclusion that protection of reindeer migration corridors and winter grazing areas in the setting remains inadequate is recalled, particularly in light of the planned expansion of activities (power grid, potential mining, forestry, etc.) and the importance of reindeer herding. The preparation of a buffer zone proposal, in accordance with Paragraph 164 of the *Operational Guidelines* and in consultation with the concerned Sámi Indigenous Peoples, therefore, remains an important outstanding measure.

14. Overall, while some progress has been made in implementing the Committee's requests and the recommendations of the 2024 Reactive Monitoring mission, it remains limited. In the meantime, several projects continue to advance within the property and its wider setting. Significant and potentially irreversible threats to the property's OUV, arising from the cumulative impacts of mining and infrastructure developments and the lack of adequate safeguards for Sámi reindeer herding, persist and underscore the need for urgent, coordinated and precautionary actions by the State Party, in line with the Committee's previous decisions.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.63***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decision CONF 201 VIII.B (20th session, Merida, 1996), by which the Committee recommended that the Swedish authorities continue to work with local Sámi people, Decision 37 COM 7 (Part III) adopted at its 37th session (Phnom Penh, 2013), which urged all States Parties and leading industry stakeholders to respect the International Council on Mining and Metals "No-go" commitment by not permitting extractive activities within World Heritage properties and by making every effort to ensure that extractive companies located in their territory cause no damage to World Heritage properties, in accordance with Article 6 of the Convention, and Decisions 45 COM 7B.32, 46 COM 7B.45 and 47 COM 7B.55, adopted at its extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023), 46th (New Delhi, 2024) and 47th (UNESCO, 2025) sessions respectively;*

3. *Recalls with significant concern that the 2024 joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission concluded that the proposed Kallak mining project, located near the property within a critical reindeer migration corridor, would pose a significant threat to the cultural and natural values of the property, in particular to the Sámi reindeer transhumance system, which is a key attribute of its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), also recalls the Mission's conclusion that any proposed mitigation measures would be insufficient to avoid these impacts and could therefore threaten the long-term sustainability of Sámi reindeer herding, a living cultural practice underpinning the property's OUV, and again urges the State Party not to grant the environmental permit required for mining to proceed;*

4. *Takes note that a World Heritage Impact Assessment for the proposed mining project, initiated in 2024, remains underway and is expected to be finalised in 2026 in accordance with the* Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, *and to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to any decision on the environmental permit required for mining to proceed, and requests the State Party to ensure that the outcome of such review, together with any related Committee decisions, is duly taken into consideration in the environmental permit application process;*

5. *Also notes with concern that test drilling at Allivaara, in the vicinity of the property, continues under an exploration permit in the absence of an impact assessment;*

6. *Takes note of the establishment of a dedicated working group to address the Committee's requests and the recommendations of the 2024 joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission, including the development of a Sustainable Development Strategy to respond to growing pressures on the property and its setting, and continues to encourage the State Party to ensure that this Strategy is developed in full consultation with the concerned Sámi Indigenous Peoples, and to submit the draft Strategy to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to its finalisation;*

7. *Expresses concern at the limited progress in implementing the Committee's previous requests, in particular with regard to undertaking a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), despite the continued emergence of development projects within and in the setting of the property, and therefore reiterates its request for the State Party to:*

   a) *Undertake, as a matter of priority, an SEA for the property to assess the cumulative impact of all major development projects on the OUV of the property,*

   b) *Ensure that all planned developments are assessed for their potential impacts on the property's OUV through Heritage and/or Environmental Impact Assessments conducted in accordance with the* Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*, and based on a clear identification of the attributes underpinning the property's OUV,*

   c) *Submit these assessments to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to any decisions being taken;*

8. *Further notes with concern the reported impacts of climate change on the property's ecosystems and Sámi reindeer husbandry, and encourages the State Party to ensure that climate change considerations are effectively integrated into planning, monitoring and management processes for the property;*

9. *Requests furthermore the State Party to ensure that the planned revision of the Management Plan addresses the recommendations of the 2024 Reactive Monitoring mission, clearly defines the attributes underpinning the property's OUV, and aligns management, legal protection and decision-making processes, and also encourages the State Party to submit the revised draft Management Plan to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to its adoption;*

10. *Welcomes the Swedish Government's initiative to commission the Swedish Agency for Public Management to review existing protection and management measures to ensure the sustainable and long-term conservation of the property, and reiterates its call upon the State Party to continue clarifying legal protection measures and governance responsibilities for safeguarding the property's OUV, and to ensure their alignment with national legislation, as well as international obligations under the Convention and relevant human rights standards;*

11. *Also reiterates its request to the State Party to ensure that any further consideration of mining permits and major infrastructure developments guarantees the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of the Sámi Indigenous Peoples, and to integrate FPIC procedures into decision-making processes for all future major infrastructure and industrial projects, in accordance with international standards, including the Convention;*

12. *Strongly encourages the State Party to submit, in consultation with the concerned Sámi Indigenous Peoples, a request for a minor boundary modification to establish a buffer zone explicitly linked to the protection of the property's OUV, in accordance with Paragraph 164 of the Operational Guidelines, noting that the protection of reindeer migration corridors and winter grazing areas in the setting of the property remains inadequate;*

13. *Reiterates its request to the State Party to address all remaining recommendations of the 2024 Reactive Monitoring mission and to provide an update in its next report;*

14. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2027**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and on the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 49th session.*

## AFRICA

### 67. Ngorongoro Conservation Area (United Republic of Tanzania)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
1979

*Criteria*
(iv)(vii)(viii)(ix)(x)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
1984-1989

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/39/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 16 (from 1979-2014)
Total amount approved: USD 290,386
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/39/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
Total amount provided to the property: USD 50,000 from Switzerland, USD 35,000 from the Netherlands, USD 20,000 from the United Nations Development Assistance Plan (UNDAP) and USD 8,000 self-benefitting funds from the United Republic of Tanzania for community consultative process in 2013-2014; USD 50,000 from the Flanders Funds-in-Trust for sustainable tourism strategy in 2014-2015

*Previous monitoring missions*
April 1986: IUCN mission; April-May 2007 and December 2008: World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring missions; February 2011: World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission; April 2012: World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission; August 2017: ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission; March 2019: Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission; February 2024: Joint UNESCO/ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*
Geothermal energy development project (issue resolved)
Buildings and Development (potential impact of a lodge development project on the crater rim, proposed museum building at Laetoli)
Transportation infrastructure (impact of the project for upgrading Lodoare Gate to Golini Main Road, construction of the southern bypass road and access road to Olduvai museum)
Biological resource use/modification (poaching, grazing pressure)
Social/cultural uses of heritage (relevance of Maasai traditional knowledge to the management of the area, increased human population, tourism pressure, challenges facing community livelihoods)
Invasive/alien species (spread of invasive species)
Management System/Management Plan (including governance of the property and community involvement/collaboration, condition and conservation of the Laetoli hominid footprints)

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/39/

*Current conservation issues*

1. On 1 February 2026, the State Party submitted a report on the state of conservation of the property, available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/39/documents, which reports the following:

    a) In December 2024, the President of the Tanzania formed two Commissions of Inquiry, the first to assess land-use issues within the property and the second to examine the voluntary relocation of local residents, which are expected to contribute to the existing protocols and

improve the implementation of the voluntary relocation, the existing Multiple Land Use Model (MLUM), and the ongoing development of the property's General Management Plan (GMP);

b) The State Party confirms its readiness and commitment to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission, and reiterates its willingness to welcome further in-person and on-site engagement with the World Heritage Committee and Advisory Bodies through subsequent missions to the property;

c) The recommendations of the 2017 ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission, and the 2019 World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission have been fully and partially implemented, respectively. An updated progress report is annexed;

d) A number of activities, including the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), a study on the property's tourism carrying capacity, and a landscape survey at Laetoli are ongoing and are expected to be completed by 2028, 2027 and 2026, respectively. The findings of these studies will be shared for review and further guidance by the Advisory Bodies;

e) Baseline ecological and archaeological studies, and Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) dated 2018 and 2021 respectively, have been submitted for the Lodoare Gate-Golini Road upgrade. The State Party confirms the adoption of a three-stage construction plan and its future reclassification from a trunk road to a park road;

f) In 2025, southern white rhinos where translocated into the property based on the "ethical procedures and norms" of the IUCN Species Survival Commission African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG);

g) Progress continues on the assessment of the Laetoli footprints. The State Party is advancing plans to test microclimate control within enclosure through the careful removal of lava boulders and some layers from the conservation burial, with a view to reducing stress on the footprint tuff. These studies are scheduled to begin in February 2026, and findings will be submitted to the Advisory Bodies for review and further guidance;

h) Human and livestock population growth, as well as climate change are reported as ongoing conservation issues to the property;

i) Preparations of terms of reference for the review of the Management Zone Plan (MZP) which ended in 2025 have been conducted.

2. On 28 April 2026, the World Heritage Centre sent a letter to the State Party in accordance with paragraph 174 of the Operational Guidelines, following third party information and the receipt of more than 3,000 petition letters concerning the outcomes of the two Presidential Commissions to examine land-related issues and assess the implementation of the voluntary relocation programme.

3. On 25 May 2026, in response to the above, the State Party reported that the Presidential Commissions have concluded that the existing MLUM is no longer sustainable, and recommended enhancing the voluntary relocation programme, reviewing the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Act, improving community engagement, standardizing relocation incentives and better managing resettlement sites. The State Party maintains that the relocation programme is voluntary and human-rights compliant and rejects allegations of forced evictions and suspension of social services to residents remaining within the property.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies*

4. In line with previous decisions of the World Heritage Committee, the continued implementation of a multiple land use management approach in consultation with all stakeholders and rightsholders and which ensures a clear human right based approach should underpin planning and management for the property. The reported findings of the Presidential Commissions of Inquiry, in particular the conclusion that the continuation of the existing MLUM is no longer sustainable and the emphasis on voluntary relocation as the principal response are noted.

5. A multiple land use approach has been central to the management of the property since inscription, and therefore any decision to move away from such an approach would constitute a major change in the management framework of the property. Any change should be based on a robust, transparent and human rights-based process, and should include full and effective

engagement with all stakeholders and rightsholders, including residents who oppose relocation, and should also be informed by the findings of the requested joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission. In this regard the readiness by the State Party to invite the mission, as requested by the Committee since 2024, is welcome.

6. It is recommended that the State Party be requested to submit the full reports of the Presidential Commissions, to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies, before any decision is taken to move away from a multiple land use management approach.

7. The preparatory work undertaken for the Lodoare Gate-Golini Road upgrade is noted, which includes the completion of the phased construction plan, submission of the 2018 baseline ecological and archaeological studies, and a 2021 ESIA. The State Party affirms that the road will formally be reclassified from a trunk road to a park road which is welcomed, though no timeframe or progress is reported. An action plan to manage road use that was requested by the Committee is still pending. It is recommended that the State Party submit the complete Action Plan as previously requested, and provide regular progress reports during phased implementation, with particular attention to ensure the functioning of the proposed Project Environmental and Heritage Monitoring Committee and the effectiveness of traffic control measures in preventing increased transit traffic through the property.

8. The reported timeline for completion of an SEA, tourism carrying capacity, and a landscape survey at Laetoli is noted, though no update is provided on the development of a tourism interpretation strategy and monitoring framework for the property (Decision **47 COM 7B.60**). However, the State Party has not yet provided details of the climate control trials that have commenced at the Laetoli footprint site G, which the Committee requested be submitted as soon as possible. This remains urgent, as these experiments seem to be based in part on expert opinion reported in the Laetoli Footprints Conservation and Sustainable Use Roadmap, which the Committee requested the State Party not to implement. The Roadmap is based on the opinion that the footprints at site G have lost their significant scientific value due to changes of their shape and other anthropogenic imperfections on their surface. The Committee may wish to reiterate its request to the State Party to engage the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies in the evaluation of further conservation actions before any decisions are made on the conservation, and presentation of the footprints at the site.

9. Although the translocation of southern white rhinos is reported to comply with AfRSG ethical procedures and norms, no update has been provided on whether the State Party addressed the concerns prior to the introduction, as requested by the Committee. It is recalled that Tanzania is not part of the species' contemporary range, that CITES has defined suitable and appropriate destinations for exports of rhino, and the long-term approaches to managing the species and risks are required. It is recommended that the State Party clarify how AfRSG's concerns were addressed, detail the measures taken to ensure the best practice, and confirm that future translocations will be guided by AfRSG's written technical advice.

10. The progress update on the implementation of the 2017 and 2019 mission recommendations is appreciated, and the reported efforts to address poaching and invasive alien species are noted. However, there is a lack of quantitative and qualitative monitoring indicators to assess the effectiveness of these efforts in mitigating these two persistent threats to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. It is recommended that the State Party submit a detailed report on poaching and invasive species that includes: (a) quantitative trend data on poaching incidents and enforcement outcomes; (b) proposed monitoring indicators for invasive species with baseline data; and (c) an assessment of the effectiveness of current control measures.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B. 67***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

*1. Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decisions **45 COM 7B.30**, **46 COM 7B.48**, and **47 COM 7B.60** adopted at its extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023), 46th (New Delhi, 2024) and 47th (UNESCO, 2025) sessions respectively;*

3. *Notes the reported findings of the two Presidential Commissions of Inquiry which conclude that the current Multiple Land Use Model (MLUM) is no longer sustainable and place emphasis on voluntary relocation as a principal response, and considers that any move away from a multiple land use management approach would constitute a major change in the management framework for the property, which should not be undertaken without full and effective consultation with all stakeholders and rightsholders, including those who oppose relocation, and without prior review by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies;*

4. *Requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre the full reports of the Presidential Commissions of Inquiry, and strongly requests the State Party not to take any decision to move away from a multiple land use management approach, before any contemplated changes are considered through the previously requested joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission;*

5. *Takes note with appreciation of the State Party's willingness to invite the requested joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property, and also requests that this mission be undertaken as a matter of utmost priority;*

6. *Also notes with appreciation the progress update to implement the recommendations of the 2017 ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission and the 2019 World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission, and further requests the State Party to continue its efforts to ensure their implementation in full and keep the World Heritage Centre informed;*

7. *Welcomes the State Party's confirmation that the Lodoare Gate–Golini road through the property will be reclassified from a trunk road to a park road, however notes with concern that the required operational action plan to manage road use continues to be pending, and requests furthermore the State Party to:*

   a) *Submit a completed action plan to manage road use, and an update on its implementation,*

   b) *Provide a progress report on the phased implementation of the road project,*

   c) *Ensure the Project Environmental and Heritage Monitoring Committee that will be appointed to monitor the road upgrade, considers all attributes of Outstanding Universal Value to avoid any negative impacts,*

   d) *Demonstrate the effectiveness of traffic control measures in preventing increased transit traffic through the property;*

8. *Expresses concern over the translocation of southern white rhinoceros into the property in the absence of confirmation that the concerns raised by the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG) have been addressed, and requests moreover the State Party to clarify how these concerns were addressed, detail the measures taken to ensure the best practice, and ensure that any future translocations are undertaken in line with written technical advice from the AfRSG;*

9. *Also notes the initiation of a landscape study at Laetoli which will investigate ecological, archaeological and historic features, expresses again its concern that a temporary enclosure and climate control trials have commenced at the Laetoli footprint site G, and reiterates its requests that the State Party:*

a) *Submit, as soon as possible, further details of the experimental project at site G to the World Heritage Centre,*

b) *Engage the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies in the evaluation of further conservation actions before any decisions are made on the conservation, and presentation of the footprints at the site;*

10. *Further notes the reported efforts to address poaching and invasive alien species, but regrets the lack of measurable indicators to assess their effectiveness, and additionally requests the State Party to provide:*

    a) *Quantitative trend data for poaching incidents and enforcement outcomes,*

    b) *proposed monitoring indicators for invasive species with baseline data,*

    c) *assessment of the effectiveness of current control measures;*

11. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by* ***1 December 2027****, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 50th session.*

# NATURAL PROPERTIES

## ARAB STATES

### 68. Socotra Archipelago (Yemen)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
2008

*Criteria*
(x)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
N/A

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1263/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 2 (from 2017-2023)
Total amount approved: USD 131,560
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1263/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
*N/A*

*Previous monitoring missions*
December 2012: IUCN mission; June 2014: IUCN/Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH) mission; May 2025: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*
- Management systems/management plan
- Legal frameworks
- Governance
- Buildings and development
- Ground transport infrastructure: road network
- Biological resource use/modification
- Invasive/alien species or hyper-abundant species: absence of adequate biosecurity measures to avoid the introduction of invasive alien species
- Livestock farming/grazing of domesticated animals
- Fishing/collecting aquatic resources
- Solid waste: primarily in and around main settlements
- Civil unrest: unrest inhibiting management and access of international experts and capacity building support
- Climate change and severe weather events: cyclones, storms
- Impact of oil spill pollution from January 2023

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1263/

*Current conservation issues*

1. On 30 January 2025, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report, an executive summary of which is available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1263/documents/.

2. Progress in a number of conservation issues addressed by the Committee at its previous sessions is presented in this report, as follows:

a) Effective protection and management of the property continue to be significantly constrained by the political instability, economic crisis, and ongoing conflict in Yemen, resulting in limited national financial resources and weakened institutional capacity;

b) Regarding invasive alien species (IAS), the 2025-2030 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan III (NBSAP III) provides a framework to address major biodiversity threats including IAS, complemented with other key documents, and gradual strengthening of IAS management includes institutional coordination, enhancing surveillance and detection, establishing a dedicated IAS unit under the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) branch of Socotra, and progressing quarantine controls;

c) Several projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) include:

i. The United Nations Environnement Programme (UNEP)-Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature project concluded end of 2025, focused notably on IAS and protected area (PA) management, as well as spatial planning; finalization of the Conservation Zoning Plan (CZP), the Land Use Plan and the General Management Plan (GMP) will require additional financial resources and specialized technical expertise,

ii. The follow-up project under GEF-8 is expected to further strengthen biosecurity and support the preparation of four new PA management plans (MP) and implementation of existing PA MPs,

iii. The ongoing Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) project, focused on agriculture, livestock, and fisheries sectors, will support PA management including new MPs, and development of an ecosystem restoration assessment and an atlas of the property's marine and terrestrial biodiversity, complementing State Party activities;

d) Measures have been taken to reinforce compliance of development activities with the legal, planning and zoning framework, including the application of Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) and EPA staff training; a multi-sectoral committee (local authorities, security services, technical institutions) coordinated by EPA Socotra was established in 2025 to review and monitor development activities in coastal areas, protected sites and national parks, with actions planned for 2026;

e) Efforts are ongoing to enhance institutional coordination, improve technical readiness, and integrate lessons learned from oil spill response actions into future preparedness and response arrangements;

f) Priority management areas have been identified to address the cumulative threats affecting the property and to strengthen the protection of its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), including climate change, IAS, zoning and land-use planning, biodiversity conservation, plastic pollution, habitat restoration, and sustainable livelihoods and community engagement;

g) A total of 31 documents relating to national planning and the conservation of the property are annexed to the State Party report.

3. A joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission took place from 6 to13 May 2025 and its report is available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1263/documents/ .

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN*

4. It remains of serious concern that the effective protection and management of the property continues to be constrained by political instability, economic crisis, and ongoing conflict in Yemen, resulting in limited national financial resources and weakened institutional capacity. As highlighted by the Reactive Monitoring mission, the State Party's continued commitment and efforts to protect the property despite the exceptionally challenging context, and the important role of local communities in terms of traditional knowledge and customary practices, is acknowledged.

5. Recalling that the mission has not been feasible for several years, it is welcomed that the mission was able to visit the property and assess the state of conservation of the property. In this regard, the mission concluded that the property continues to retain the biodiversity values for which it was inscribed. However, it also highlighted increasing signs of ecological deterioration of key attributes

of the OUV of the property, including its terrestrial and marine ecosystems, due to a combination of anthropogenic pressures and climate-related impacts, identified serious issues threatening the property's integrity, and weaknesses in its protection and management, in particular:

a) Development pressure remains a major concern and has largely occurred without Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and outside the provisions of the existing zoning system. However, impacts are concentrated in certain areas and much of the property remains relatively intact. Although the State Party is now reinforcing compliance, uncontrolled development and large-scale land reservations continue to pose a major threat to the property and its integrity;

b) Effective legal protection and management are significantly constrained, with the absence of an updated archipelago-wide management framework and limited enforcement capacity. While the legal framework for conservation remains in place, anchored in the 2000 Socotra CZP and the Environmental Protection Law, management effectiveness is low, the CZP is due for systematic revision, implementation has not kept pace with mounting pressures, and governance remains fragile;

c) IAS continue to pose a major risk to the property's ecosystems, with biosecurity measures not yet fully operational, and the outer islands remain particularly vulnerable due to limited institutional presence and weak control of IAS pathways;

d) Waste and plastic pollution are increasing rapidly, particularly in urban areas and coastal settlements. Although the impact on the property is assumed to be limited at present, it poses an increasing threat to coastal ecosystems, human health and the visitor experience;

e) Immediate threat of the oil spill from the *Gulf Dove* tanker grounded at Delisha Nature Sanctuary since 2019 has been largely resolved through clean-up and ongoing dismantling of the tanker, but overall risk of future oil spills remain high due to limited contingency planning;

f) The impacts of climate change and extreme weather events, including cyclones, coral bleaching, drought and flooding are already affecting the ecological resilience of the property as well as key terrestrial and marine ecosystems underpinning the OUV;

g) The unsustainable use of natural resources is a persistent threat to the property and human well-being. Stronger regulation and strengthening of community-based management and benefit-sharing are required;

h) The property's outer islands are of particular concern, with infrastructure development, and where management authorities have limited access.

6. The ongoing efforts reported in the 2026 State Party report to address the various aforementioned concerns, such as the focus on IAS in the NBSAP and dedicated IAS unit within EPA Socotra, or the establishment of a committee to review and monitor development projects and apply EIAs, as well as the various GEF funded project activities to finalise the GMP and CZP, or strengthen management, are welcomed. Nevertheless, the mission found that limited support had been provided for the implementation of the strategic documents and plans developed under the GEF project activities, and their legal status was unclear. There is a need to further align these activities with the requirements of the Convention, while also ensuring the consistent application of EIA procedures in accordance with national law and the Operational Guidelines. Many of the past and planned activities (tourism, fisheries and agriculture), would require impact assessments and appropriate safeguards to protect OUV. While the numerous project outputs may address key conservation priorities, they also highlight an increasingly complex management framework.

7. Based on the mission findings, the property continues to face significant threats resulting from the cumulative impact of development pressures, IAS, pollution, climate change, unsustainable resource use, and inadequate protection and management. It is noted that the mission considered that most of the identified threats are largely reversible, provided that immediate resources are deployed to address urgent conservation and management needs. Hence, inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger is not recommended at this stage. However, if not urgently addressed, these threats could have detrimental effects on the property's inherent characteristics, as defined in Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines, and the property could meet the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

8. Noting the signs of ecological deterioration of the property reported by the mission, a comprehensive assessment of the property's terrestrial and marine ecosystems, drawing on both scientific data and local knowledge, is needed to inform management and protection measures as well as the related strategic documents. The reported development of an ecosystem restoration assessment and an atlas provides an important opportunity for advance this work. These assessments should include an evaluation of key attributes and threats affecting OUV. The World Heritage Centre and IUCN stand ready to support this work.

9. Acknowledging the ongoing actions reported since the mission, it is recommended that the Committee request the State Party to fully implement the mission's recommendations to address the threats to the OUV of the property, and to provide a comprehensive update on progress in its next report. Implementation of the mission recommendations will require substantial additional funding, as well as donor support being directed towards addressing conservation priorities.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.68***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decision **47 COM 7B.53**, adopted at its 47th session (UNESCO, 2025),*

3. *Reiterates its serious concern that the ongoing political instability, economic crisis and conflict in Yemen continue to pose significant challenges to the effective protection and management of the property, and notes with appreciation the State Party's continued commitment to safeguarding the property under exceptionally difficult circumstances;*

4. *Welcomes the financial and technical assistance provided by various conservation partners, , and calls upon the international community to support the State Party's efforts to safeguard the property;*

5. *Notes with serious concern the conclusions of the 2025 joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission that, while the property continues to retain the exceptional biodiversity for which it was inscribed, key terrestrial and marine ecosystems that constitute part of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property are deteriorating and the property's integrity is facing threats due to the cumulative impact of development pressures, invasive alien species (IAS), pollution, climate change, and unsustainable resource use, and that whilst a legal framework is in place, protection and management remain weak and insufficient, and that these threats could pose a serious potential and ascertained danger to the property if left unresolved;*

6. *Notes the conclusion of the 2025 mission that the property continues to retain the exceptional biodiversity for which it was inscribed, the attributes of OUV remain present, and most of the identified threats are largely reversible provided that they are addressed promptly and the necessary capacity and resources to improve the state of conservation of the property are available, and therefore does not recommend inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, but considers that the urgent conservation needs of the property require a broad mobilization of resources and support to preserve its OUV, and also notes that a new Reactive Monitoring mission by 2030 would allow the Committee to assess the implementation of the mission recommendations and progress made to address the threats to the OUV and reverse the deterioration of the state of conservation, and whether the property meets the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger if its state of conservation does not substantially improve;*

7. *Requests the State Party to implement the recommendations of the 2025 mission, including the following priority actions:*

   a) *Finalize and secure legal approval for an archipelago-wide Vision, General Management Plan, Conservation Zoning Plan (CZP), and Development Master Plan, ensuring political support and compatibility with World Heritage requirements;*

   b) *Immediately halt all unapproved projects, and conduct retrospective assessments of any impacts on the OUV of the property from existing developments undertaken without a prior impact assessment, and implement remediation and restoration where required;*

   c) *Enforce a moratorium on unauthorised construction, land allocations and construction of walls in the property, and reverse unlawful land allocations and acquisitions, particularly in sensitive coastal and plateau areas;*

   d) *Operationalise biosecurity and IAS management by implementing the IAS Strategy and Action Plan, ensuring adequate pathway controls and quarantine facilities are in place, and actively managing outer islands;*

   e) *Establish island-wide systems for waste management, with priority given to urban centres and settlements responsible for the increasing waste load;*

   f) *Scale up habitat restoration and recovery, and strengthen measures to regulate grazing, fuelwood collection, and fisheries in line with the property's ecological carrying capacity; at the same time, support sustainable livelihoods for local communities, building on traditional and knowledge and customary practices, and ensure they benefit equitably from conservation and tourism;*

   g) *Integrate cyclone and risk preparedness, climate monitoring, and adaptation measures into property management in order to reduce vulnerability of both ecosystems and communities;*

   h) *Reinforce the conservation and management system, institutional presence and co-management, including to strengthen the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and local government authority on the management of the property, with permanent presence in high-pressure areas and expanded co-management agreements with local communities;*

8. *Acknowledges with appreciation the State Party's efforts to reinforce compliance of development activities with the relevant legal, planning and zoning framework, but notes with concern the development of several large-scale infrastructure projects within and adjacent to the property without full Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) or approval, reiterates its request to the State Party and all stakeholders involved in such projects to ensure that related impact assessments are implemented, as required by national laws, and conducted in line with the* Operational Guidelines *and the* Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*, before making any irreversible decision and begin construction;*

9. *Welcomes the State Party's efforts to mobilise resources, including through the Global Environment Facility (GEF), to improve the property's protection and management and to support sustainable livelihoods, and also requests the State Party to ensure that these activities are aligned with World Heritage requirements, including safeguards and impact assessments for activities that may affect the property and its OUV;*

10. *Invites the State Party and its conservation partners to ensure that all planned activities, such as the preparation of an ecosystem restoration assessment, atlas on biodiversity and landuse, and other studies, take into consideration the attributes and threats relevant*

*to the protection of the property's OUV, and are developed in partnership with relevant scientists, managers and local communities, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and IUCN, as relevant, and inform the development of the requested General Management Plan, CZP, and other strategic documents;*

11. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2027**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 50th session.*

## ASIA AND PACIFIC

### 74. Ha Long Bay - Cat Ba Archipelago (Viet Nam)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
1994

*Criteria*
(vii)(viii)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
N/A

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/672/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 6 (from 1996-2018)
Total amount approved: USD 163,145
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/672/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
Total amount provided to the property: USD 100,000 under the Youth Volunteers for Cultural Heritage Preservation project (2003-2006); USD 519,000 for Cua Van Floating Cultural Centre, a component of the Ha Long Eco-museum (funded by the Government of Norway, for the period of 2003-2006).

*Previous monitoring missions*
January 2003, December 2006: World Heritage Centre mission; November 2013: IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission; July 2018: IUCN Advisory mission; March 2025: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*
- Identity, social cohesion, changes in local population and community (Population growth)
- Impacts of tourism / visitor / recreation
- Housing
- Industrial areas
- Financial and human resources
- Management systems / management plan
- Water pollution

*Illustrative material*

See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/672/

*Current conservation issues*

1. On 30 January 2026, the State Party submitted a report on the state of conservation of the property, available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/672/documents, which reports the following:

   a) Joint actions between Quang Ninh Province and Hai Phong City (authorities for Ha Long Bay (HLB) and Cat Ba Archipelago (CBA)) have continued. In January 2025, a Coordination Regulation on the management, protection and enhancement of the World Heritage values was signed. A draft plan for tourism cooperation (2026-2030) has been prepared. An integrated management authority for the property will be established once government arrangements are stabilised following ongoing administrative restructuring, with UNESCO and IUCN support requested. The Management Plan (MP) for the property (2026-2035, vision to 2050) and related regulations are expected to be completed in 2026;

b) The authorities are committed to sustainable tourism. A 'Master Plan for Tourism Development of Hai Phong City to 2025, with a vision to 2030' has been approved and the carrying capacity (CC) study for the Cat Ba Tourist Area is being prepared. The HLB CC study has informed various regulatory and planning instruments (e.g. Sustainable Tourism Development Plan for HLB to 2030; Environmental Protection Plan for HLB (2025-2030); Management Plan for HLB heritage area (2026-2035, vision to 2050); development of visitor routes and high-quality tourism products; developing a code of conduct for tourism activities in HLB; and Sustainable Tourism (Green Tourism) indicators for tourism activities in HLB), as well as digital technologies to support tourism management (e.g. electronic ticketing). The CC studies will inform the MP for the property;

c) Given the significant increase in visitor numbers in recent years and resulting tourism pressure on the property, the development of tourism services and infrastructure outside the property (adjacent to the buffer zone of CBA) is considered essential. Along the HLB coast, measures to promote, communicate and enhance the heritage values include coordinated approval of developments (hotels, resorts, integrated tourism and commercial amenities) to provide high-quality experiences, in alignment with the Quang Ninh Provincial Planning for the period of 2021-2030, with a vision to 2050, approved by the Prime Minister. Projects require Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) as per national requirements;

d) The 'Cat Ba Central Bay Tourism, Service and Commercial Area Project' (Central Bay project) is summarised as having been approved outside the buffer zone, that the 2024 EIA anticipated no adverse impacts and addresses the previously fragmented landscape (fishing vessel operations and anchoring, restaurants, waste disposal sites, wastewater discharge). It is expected to enhance landscape quality, create livelihood opportunities and reduce visitor pressure on the property;

e) Further to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) carried out by Quang Ninh Province in preparation of the aforementioned Provincial Planning for 2021-2030, Hai Phong City assigned Cat Ba National Park to initiate an SEA process, in coordination with other authorities including the HLB Management Board, to assess cumulative impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) from tourism and industrial development projects located in the property, its buffer zone and adjacent areas. The outcomes intend to inform effective management planning and strategic decision-making, support the development of regulations for environmental management and protection of the property, and guide implementation of environmental monitoring and observation activities, including consolidation of studies on water quality and marine ecosystems in the property;

f) A 2025 Decree regulates the assessment of factors affecting the property, which will be carried out in line with the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context* (Guidance and Toolkit). The authorities commit to strictly complying with the Operational Guidelines including Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA) for all development projects within the property, its buffer zone or the wider setting, and to notify the World Heritage Centre of projects that may have potential impacts on the OUV;

g) A map of the entire property, showing the boundaries, buffer zone, and different land uses, has been finalised (appended), a map for CBA has been prepared, and a detailed zoning map of management regimes and land use for the entire property will be completed (once integrated into the existing HLB map);

h) Planning and management measures continue to be implemented, including to address waste and pollution;

2. On 14 October 2025, the World Heritage Centre transmitted third party concerns to the State Party regarding tourism development, pollution and the two major infrastructure developments on Cat-Ba Island ('Central Bay project' and 'Cat Ba Amatina Urban - Tourism Project' (Amatina project)). On 4 December 2025, the State Party provided a response including stating that the major tourism projects continue to comply with national commitments to environmental conservation and enhancement of the heritage values.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN*

3. It is positive that progress on several conservation issues is reported including efforts towards strengthening integrated management for the property, as well as commitments to sustainable tourism and impact assessment processes.

4. Efforts to strengthen inter-provincial coordination between the two management authorities, including a new cooperation regulation, are noted positively. As highlighted at the time of the 2023 extension and by the 2025 joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission, it remains important to implement coordinated and integrated management for the entire property. Hence, the operationalization of an integrated management authority and the anticipated finalization of the integrated management plan in 2026 should continue to be prioritised. The World Heritage Centre and IUCN remain available to provide guidance, as needed.

5. The reported commitment to sustainable tourism is appreciated. Continued progress to develop tourism measures for the two jurisdictions (e.g. Hai Phong City master plan; HLB sustainable tourism plan) to 2030 is positive. Noting that the CBA CC study remains in preparation, it is noted that the mission highlighted the ongoing need for an integrated sustainable tourism management approach for the property as a whole, including to complete a comprehensive CC study for the entire property, subsequently finalise the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy (STDS), and implement measures, e.g. Integrated Visitor Management System (IVMS).

6. Strategic tourism management is particularly important in light of the State Party ambition to position the property as a leading international tourism destination. Whilst the State Party emphasizes that infrastructure expansion along the HLB coast and Cat Ba Island (Central Bay and Amatina projects) is in line with planning regulations, addresses existing landscape concerns (e.g. waste water), enhances landscape quality and reduces visitor pressure on the property, it is important to highlight that the mission considered the scale and pace of tourism and urban development in the buffer zone and wider setting to be of serious concern, noting land reclamation, high-rise construction, large tourism complexes, and associated infrastructure, which already affect visual integrity, coastal landscapes, and marine and terrestrial ecosystems. The map appended to the State Party report also shows that large areas within the property, its buffer zone and the wider setting, including forest and mangrove ecosystems, have already been degraded. It is therefore important that any existing developments be appropriately assessed to ensure they do not negatively impact the OUV, and that any new projects be appropriately assessed in line with the Guidance and Toolkit prior to any approvals. Hence, the confirmation that impact assessments are now required for all projects within the property, buffer zone and wider setting in line with the Guidance and Toolkit is positive. The mission also highlighted that, while initiatives aimed at improving tourism quality, strengthening pollution control, and developing CC studies are positive, it considered that current planning and assessment mechanisms are insufficient to address cumulative impacts on the OUV. In particular, the absence of a comprehensive SEA covering the property, buffer zone, and wider setting remains a critical gap, despite repeated Committee requests. It is therefore positive that an SEA has now been initiated, and the World Heritage Centre and IUCN remain available for technical support. The mission also recommended to establish specific and enforceable regulations for the buffer zone, including detailed land-use designations and planning controls to ensure that the buffer zone provides an effective additional layer of protection that contributes to the protection of the OUV of the property, and reflect these in the Master Plan.

7. The mission noted various waste measures and recommended the implementation of effective pollution and waste monitoring and management measures for the property, buffer zone and wider setting including in relation to waste collection/treatment, and periodic water quality monitoring. The development of further detailed maps for the property is acknowledged and should be used to inform effective joint management for the property.

8. In line with the Committee request at the time of the extension, the mission recommended that the boundaries of Cat Ba National Park be extended to align with those of the property, to provide adequate legal protection to the whole property and enhance effective management.

9. Finally, the mission highlighted that without urgent action to strengthen strategic planning, undertake an SEA, rigorously apply impact assessment processes, and ensure fully integrated management across the property, its buffer zone, and wider setting, the long-term conservation of the property's OUV cannot be assured. It is therefore recommended that the Committee review at its 50th session, progress achieved in the implementation of the 2025 mission

recommendations taking into consideration the latest State Party measures, with a view to considering in the case of absence of substantial progress, the possible inscription of the World Heritage property on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.74***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decisions **45 COM 7B.89**, **45 COM 8B.3**, **45 COM 8D**, **46 COM 7B.67** and **47 COM 7B.16**, adopted at its extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023), 46th (New Delhi, 2024), and 47th (UNESCO, 2025) sessions, respectively,*

3. *Notes with appreciation the ongoing efforts to strengthen inter-provincial coordination between Quang Ninh Province and Hai Phong City authorities including a new 2025 Coordination Regulation, and requests the State Party to finalize the establishment and operationalization of an integrated management body for the property and the integrated management plan for the property and to submit the plan to the World Heritage Centre;*

4. *Also notes with appreciation the reported commitment to a sustainable tourism approach for the property, the progress in development of individual tourism management measures for Hai Phong City and Ha Long Bay, and that a carrying capacity study for the Cat Ba Archipelago is in development;*

5. *Takes note of the State Party's ambition to position the property as a leading international tourism destination and that infrastructure expansion on the Ha Long Bay coast (buffer zone) and on Cat Ba Island (e.g. Central Bay and Amatina projects) is considered to be in line with planning regulations, enhances landscape quality and reduces visitor pressure on the property, however notes with concern that the 2025 joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission considered the scale and pace of tourism and urban development in the buffer zone and wider setting to be of serious concern, already affecting visual integrity, coastal landscapes, and marine and terrestrial ecosystems, and that while initiatives aimed at improving tourism quality, strengthening pollution control, and developing carrying capacity studies are encouraging, current planning and assessment mechanisms are insufficient to address cumulative impacts on Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);*

6. *Welcomes the confirmation that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been initiated to assess cumulative impacts on the OUV from tourism and industrial development projects located in the property, its buffer zone and adjacent areas, the outcomes of which intend to inform effective management planning and strategic decision-making, support the development of regulations for environmental management and protection of the property, and guide implementation of environmental monitoring and observation activities, including consolidation of studies on water quality and marine ecosystems in the property, and that all projects in the property, buffer zone and wider setting will be subject to impact assessments in line with the* Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context *(Guidance and Toolkit);*

7. *Also takes note of the submission of a map for the entire property including delineation of its boundaries, buffer zone, and land use regime, and also requests that this inform the effective protection and management of the property;*

8. *Further notes with appreciation the ongoing implementation of various measures to address waste and other forms of environmental pollution, however also notes with concern that the aforementioned map shows that large areas within the property, its buffer zone and the wider setting, including forest and mangrove ecosystems, have been degraded, and further requests the State Party to provide detailed explanation of the degraded areas;*

9. *Requests furthermore the State Party to implement the recommendations of the 2025 joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property, including as follows:*

   a) *Urgently undertake Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs), in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit, for the ongoing major projects in the buffer zone and wider setting of the property, including the Amatina Project, the Central Bay Project, the Domino Project and the Lach Huyen International Seaport to assess their impacts on the OUV of the property, or retroactively assess impacts on the OUV where construction has commenced, and to:*

      i. *not permit any development to continue if it would have a negative impact on OUV,*

      ii. *where negative impacts have been identified, ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are urgently implemented to avoid further negative impacts on OUV, and*

      iii. *report on progress to the World Heritage Centre.*

   b) *Ensure that all proposed projects that are planned within the property, its buffer zone or the wider setting are subject to ESIAs, in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit, to assess their potential impacts on the OUV of the property, including the identification of project alternatives and a 'no project' option, and be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN, before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse, in accordance with Paragraphs 118bis and 172 of the Operational Guidelines.*

   c) *Inform the World Heritage Centre of any projects that may impact the OUV of the property, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.*

   d) *Prioritise implementation of the SEA, requested by the World Heritage Committee (Decision **46 COM 7B.67**), in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and IUCN, to evaluate cumulative impacts on the OUV of the property from existing and planned tourism, industrial and other infrastructure development projects located within the property, its buffer zone, and the wider setting, to inform effective management planning and strategic decision making, given the serious threats that these pose to the OUV, and to not permit any further developments that may impact OUV until the SEA has been undertaken.*

   e) *Establish specific and enforceable regulations for the buffer zone, including detailed land-use designations and planning controls to ensure that the buffer zone provides an effective additional layer of protection that contributes to the protection of the OUV of the property, and reflect these in the Master Plan.*

   f) *Implement an integrated sustainable tourism management approach for the entire property to effectively address increasing tourism pressure on the OUV of the property, including to:*

      i. *ensure the assessment of the carrying capacity for the property (requested by the Committee since Decision **46 COM 7B.67**) is understood as a dynamic management process focussed on regulating visitor flows, spatial and temporal*

*distribution and visitor experience quality (including psychological capacity), and not on a fixed numerical threshold,*

ii. *finalise the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy (STDS) based on the carrying capacity,*

iii. *finalise an Integrated Visitor Management System (IVMS) for the entire property.*

g) *Implement a coordinated and integrated management approach for the property including to finalise and operationalise the Integrated Management Plan for the entire property through a participatory and inclusive process and operationalise the joint 'Management Board of the Ha Long Bay – Cat Ba Archipelago World Heritage property'.*

h) *Ensure effective pollution and waste monitoring and management measures for the property, buffer zone and wider setting including in relation to waste collection and treatment, periodic water quality monitoring, and implementation of a wastewater treatment system for Ha Long City.*

i) *Extend the boundaries of Cat Ba National Park to align with those of the World Heritage property as requested by the Committee at the time of the extension, to give adequate legal protection to the whole property and enhance effective management.*

10. *Further notes with concern the mission conclusion that without urgent action to strengthen strategic planning, undertake an SEA, rigorously apply impact assessment processes, and ensure fully integrated management across the property, its buffer zone, and wider setting, the long-term conservation of the property's OUV cannot be assured, and that this may lead to the property facing potential danger from major threats which could have deleterious effects on its inherent characteristics, in accordance with Paragraph 180(b) of the Operational Guidelines in future, and requests moreover the State Party to provide an update on implementation of the above;*

11. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by* ***1 December 2027****, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 50th session.*

## EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

### 75. Białowieża Forest (Belarus, Poland)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
1979

*Criteria*
(ix)(x)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
N/A

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/33/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 0
Total amount approved: USD 0
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/33/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
N/A

*Previous monitoring missions*
March 2004, October 2008, September/October 2018 and March 2024: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring missions; June 2016: IUCN Advisory mission

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*

- Forestry/wood production (logging in the partially protected zones and removal of deadwood)
- Alterations of the hydrological regime
- Border fence impeding mammal movements
- Ambiguity regarding the boundaries of the property *(issue resolved)*
- Management systems/management plan (lack of a Transboundary Management Plan for the property and of a Transboundary Steering Committee with adequate human and financial resources)
- Financial resources
- Human resources
- Illegal activities
- Invasive/alien terrestrial species

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/33/

*Current conservation issues*

1. On 30 January 2026, the States Parties of Belarus and Poland submitted separate reports on the state of conservation of the property, available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/33/documents/. These indicate that, in the current geopolitical context, transboundary cooperation, including cooperation on the development of a Transboundary Management Plan (TMP) and at the technical level, remains not feasible. The implementation of the recommendations of the 2024 Reactive Monitoring mission is reported to be ongoing by each State Party. The following additional information is provided:

    a) Belarus:

        i. A 2025 indefinite ban on wolf hunting in Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park (BPNP) is expected to restore ecological predator-prey relationships and reduce excessive

ungulate numbers affecting natural forest regeneration. Wolves will remain fully protected and monitored;

ii. The BPNP Management Plan (MP) is currently under revision following its expiry in 2025; the updated version will be transmitted in English to the World Heritage Centre;

iii. In 2024-25, scientific research was undertaken to determine the optimal population levels of wild ungulates within the BPNP. In 2025, measures to restore natural hydrological conditions included the approval of an action plan for the management of the Dikoye swamp (cleaning works, wildlife monitoring, habitat restoration) and a project for the restoration of the Narewka River. The clearing of 50,000 ha of forest roads and glades has been excluded from the forest management planning framework, and artificial reforestation has been prohibited over an area of 9,300 ha in order to maintain habitat mosaics;

iv. Concerns regarding the impacts of border infrastructure on the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) continue to be raised;

v. Transboundary cooperation between Belarus and Poland has remained effectively suspended since 2022, with no formal exchanges or joint initiatives, while only limited informal technical information exchange continues.

b) Poland:

i. Efforts to monitor and mitigate the impacts of the border infrastructure are ongoing, including the construction of additional culverts to improve the continuity of the hydrological regime and the removal of alien species;

ii. Ongoing pressures related to unauthorised border crossings within the property are reported, which in 2025 accounted for approximately 30% of all attempted illegal crossings. In 2026, the second line of the barrier is planned to be upgraded, including increasing its height from 2 m to 4 m and installing concertina wire, together with forest fencing designed to prevent animal entanglement. The opening of existing wildlife passages or the creation of additional crossings is also indicated to not be feasible in light of the current security situation;

iii. The 'National Deterrence and Defence Programme - East Shield' programme is reported to integrate environmental considerations by using the natural features of the Białowieża Forest as a defensive element with an aim to minimise additional infrastructure and limit impacts on the property;

iv. The revised MP for the area of the property in Poland, developed through public consultation, has been submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review and is reported to address identified threats to the property's OUV, the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee, the World Heritage Centre and IUCN, as well as to align habitat management with the principles set out in the 2014 nomination dossier; Forest Management Plans (FMP) remain suspended pending its adoption. The Plan further provides for maintaining up to 96% of the property under natural processes, potentially serving as a natural defensive buffer, and includes the development of guidelines to minimise environmental impacts of defence-related activities;

v. Regarding monitoring and mitigation measures, a multidisciplinary team, comprising site managers, supervisory bodies and members of the scientific community, is being established to develop, by the end of 2026, guidelines for a comprehensive ecosystem monitoring programme for the Białowieża Forest, as well as a set of corrective measures aimed at minimising the impacts of identified threats on ecological and biological processes. Monitoring of lynx populations is ongoing. In 2025, Invasive Alien Species (IAS) were removed along 10km of the border road corridor, and measures to mitigate the risk of IAS spread have been incorporated into the modernisation of the border road. Lighting within the border zone is activated by movement sensors, and border protection measures are designed to minimise the physical presence of personnel within the area;

vi. For the period 2026-2028, a scientific assessment of the ecological capacity for European bison is planned. Ongoing research on population dynamics of deer, roe deer and wild boar will cover Białowieża, Browsk and Hajnówka forest districts;

vii. Applications for funding to support conservation measures, including the restoration of natural hydrological conditions and the control of IAS, have been prepared;

viii. Additional measures are being considered to reduce the potential impacts of the Narewkowska road on forest ecosystems, including the installation of speed reduction devices and radar display systems. Road No. 687 is identified as a provincial road of strategic importance, providing the only access between Hajnówka and Narewka; its construction has been subject to a renewed review by regional authorities, which included verification of potential impacts on the property's OUV and the imposition of environmental supervision measures;

ix. A detailed analysis of the existing road network has been undertaken. Roads required for management purposes are maintained in a manner intended to avoid adverse impacts, with access largely restricted to public services. Approximately 117km of roads within the property are planned for removal. In 2025, 32,079m of fencing was removed, and no new forest fencing has been constructed in recent years;

x. Willingness is expressed to invite a new Reactive Monitoring mission;

xi. Transboundary cooperation between Poland and Belarus is currently not taking place, and its resumption is considered contingent on a change in the geopolitical situation and the restoration of diplomatic relations.

2. On 9 December 2025, the State Party of Poland submitted the revised MP. On 13 February 2026, the World Heritage Centre transmitted comments from the World Heritage Centre and IUCN, to which the State Party provided further clarifications on 6 March 2026.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN*

3. It remains a matter of serious concern that the prevailing geopolitical situation continues to adversely affect the overall management of the transboundary property. In particular, the continued presence of border barriers and associated infrastructure, together with the absence of transboundary cooperation between the States Parties of Belarus and Poland, including at the technical level, continue to undermine ecological connectivity and the integrity of the property.

4. In the absence of effective transboundary cooperation, the implementation of the 2024 mission recommendations is progressing separately within the respective territories. In Belarus, the introduction of an indefinite ban on wolf hunting, aimed at restoring ecological predator-prey dynamics and supporting forest regeneration, as well as ongoing scientific research on wild ungulates, are noted. The update of the BPNP MP following its recent expiry, should be finalised as a priority, consulting the *Managing World Heritage* Resource Manual, as needed, and submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN. Efforts to restore natural hydrological conditions, including in relation to the Dikoye swamp and the Narewka River, should also be continued.

5. In Poland, ongoing measures to monitor, avoid and mitigate the impacts of border security infrastructure and operations are noted, including the installation of additional culverts to address hydrological continuity and the removal of IAS. Efforts are also reported to minimise the environmental impacts of the 'East Shield' programme, notably through the consideration of natural terrain features in defence planning and the development of guidelines for armed forces. It is nonetheless essential that any security-related measures fully ensure the protection of the property's OUV; in this regard, the Committee may wish to reiterate the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment, prepared in accordance with the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*, to evaluate the programme's potential impacts. It is of concern that the prevailing security context, including pressures related to illegal border crossings, is leading to the planned reinforcement of border infrastructure, including increasing barrier height, installing additional concertina wire and lighting, and further constraints on wildlife movement within the property – which remains contrary to the 2024 mission recommendation to refrain from further development of barrier infrastructure – continues to affect ecological connectivity and integrity. The planned establishment of a comprehensive ecosystem monitoring programme and associated corrective measures, expected by 2026, is noted and should strengthen monitoring and mitigation. The State Party should be encouraged to report on these once finalised. Ongoing research and monitoring of key species, e.g. lynx and bison, are also noted positively and should be continued.

6. It is appreciated that the MP for the part of the property in Poland has been updated through a public consultation process and has taken into account the 2024 mission recommendations, as well as feedback from the World Heritage Centre and IUCN. Noting the additional clarifications provided in March 2026, the Committee may wish to recommend that the Plan be finalised as a matter of priority and used to guide subsequent planning instruments, including FMPs, and that progress in its implementation be assessed during the Reactive Monitoring mission requested for 2027.

7. With regard to ecological connectivity and fragmentation, it is positive that an analysis of the road network within the property has been undertaken in Poland, that access to many roads remains restricted, and that roads identified for decommissioning are to be allowed to naturally overgrow. The continued removal of forest fencing is welcomed as a positive contribution to improving connectivity. Further measures to address the impacts of the Narewkowska road should be pursued. While it is noted that Road No. 687 is considered of strategic importance and that its impacts are reported to have been assessed, the detailed information previously requested by the Committee has not been provided. Given that the road crosses areas included in the partially protected zone II of the property, which comprise old-growth forest stands and where road construction is not permitted, and noting that the project appears to involve road widening and associated infrastructure beyond routine maintenance, the ongoing works may further contribute to habitat fragmentation and affect the ecological connectivity and integrity of the property. The Committee may therefore wish to request the State Party to halt the works and to submit the requested assessment of impacts on the property's OUV.

8. Noting that transboundary cooperation remains not feasible, including at the technical level, efforts to fully implement the recommendations of the 2024 mission should continue within the respective territories. At the same time, the restoration of ecological connectivity across the entire property remains essential to safeguard its OUV, and all feasible measures towards this objective should be undertaken as conditions permit.

9. Overall, despite the progress achieved, the state of conservation of the property continues to be significantly affected by the prevailing geopolitical situation, which constrains effective transboundary management and coordinated responses to identified threats, and continues to undermine ecological connectivity and integrity. In this context, the combined effects of the absence of transboundary cooperation and the persistence and reinforcement of border infrastructure remain a fundamental constraint to the sustained protection of the property's OUV. The Committee may therefore wish to reaffirm the importance of the follow-up Reactive Monitoring mission and recommend that it be undertaken in the first trimester of 2027, so that its findings can inform the Committee at its subsequent session.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.75***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decisions **45 COM 7B.21**, **46 COM 7B.50** and **47 COM 7B.19**, adopted at its extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023), 46th (New Delhi, 2024) and 47th (UNESCO, 2025) sessions respectively,*

3. *Notes with concern that the prevailing geopolitical situation continues to adversely impact the effective protection and overall management of the transboundary property as a whole, including through the continued presence of border barriers and associated infrastructure and security operations within the property, which exacerbate ecological fragmentation, as well as through the continued lack of transboundary cooperation between the States Parties of Belarus and Poland;*

4. *Regrets that transboundary cooperation remains not feasible, including at the technical level, and reiterates its request to the States Parties of Belarus and Poland to resume*

*technical cooperation to facilitate the development and implementation of the recommended mitigation measures, as soon as conditions allow;*

5. *Takes note of the ongoing efforts by the State Party of Poland to implement the 2024 Reactive Monitoring mission recommendations in relation to the part of the property located in its territory, including measures addressing hydrological continuity, invasive alien species control, and research and monitoring of key species, and requests the State Party to continue implementing such measures, and to finalise and report on the proposed guidelines for a comprehensive ecosystem monitoring programme and associated corrective measures, expected by 2026, which should further strengthen monitoring and mitigation; however, notes with serious concern the further reinforcement and modernisation of border infrastructure, including the upgrading of barriers and associated facilities, which is contrary to the recommendations of the 2024 mission;*

6. *Also takes note of the information provided by the State Party of Poland regarding the 'National Deterrence and Defence Programme - East Shield' and the reported efforts to minimise its environmental impacts on the property; however reiterates its utmost concern regarding the potential impacts of this planned major infrastructure on the property, notes that limited information has been provided on the concrete safeguards to ensure the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and urges the State Party to ensure that the highest level of precaution is applied, that all necessary measures are taken to avoid adverse impacts of security-related activities, that the programme is subject to a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), prepared in accordance with the* Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, *and that relevant information regarding measures to avoid impacts on OUV is submitted for review by IUCN prior to any further implementation;*

7. *Notes with appreciation the confirmation that the revision of the Management Plan (MP) for the part of the property in Poland has taken into account the recommendations of the 2024 Reactive Monitoring mission, as well as feedback from the World Heritage Centre and IUCN, and further requests the State Party of Poland to finalise and implement the MP as a matter of priority, ensuring that it guides subsequent planning instruments, including Forest Management Plans;*

8. *Also notes with appreciation the efforts by the State Party of Poland to address fragmentation within the property, including analysis of the road network, restricted access to many roads, planned decommissioning of road sections, and the continued removal of forest fencing, and requests furthermore the State Party of Poland to continue efforts to reduce fragmentation and restore ecological connectivity, including in relation to the Narewkowska road, and to halt works on Road No. 687 within the property and to submit comprehensive details of the project, including an assessment of its potential impacts on the property's OUV, for review by the Advisory Bodies;*

9. *Also notes with appreciation the ongoing efforts by the State Party of Belarus to implement the 2024 mission recommendations in relation to Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park (BPNP) (area of the property in Belarus), including the indefinite ban on wolf hunting, ongoing scientific research on wild ungulates, and actions to restore hydrological processes, including in the Dikoye swamp and the Narewka river, and requests furthermore the State Party to continue these efforts in line with the mission recommendations;*

10. *Further takes note that the Management Plan for the BPNP is being updated following its expiry in 2025, and requests furthermore the State Party of Belarus to finalise this process as a priority, consulting the* Managing World Heritage *Resource Manual and to*

*submit the English translation of the draft plan to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN;*

11. *Acknowledges the progress made by both States Parties in implementing recommendations of the 2024 mission, including in relation to restoring hydrological processes and reducing habitat fragmentation, reiterates that the restoration of ecological connectivity across the entire property remains essential to safeguarding its OUV, and reiterates its request to both States Parties to fully implement the remaining recommendations of the 2024 mission, in particular to:*

    a) *Reinitiate the work on developing a Transboundary Management Plan and coordinate transboundary management actions to address the different conservation challenges of the property, as soon as transboundary cooperation becomes feasible,*

    b) *Undertake a new scientific evaluation of bison and red deer ecological carrying capacity for the entire property and implications for management of dispersal, migration and range expansion movements within and outside the property,*

    c) *Bring wildlife management in the property better in line with undisturbed ecological processes as outlined in the mission recommendations,*

    d) *Continue and further increase efforts to restore the natural hydrology of the property and include the research, monitoring and adaptation to climate change as a core guiding principle in all management planning,*

    e) *Implement measures to further reduce habitat fragmentation by avoiding any further upgrading of roads, significantly reducing the number of forestry roads and the number of forestry fences,*

    f) *Develop a vision on how the property can contribute to sustainable development of the surrounding region, based on a clear sustainable tourism strategy compatible with the protection of the OUV;*

12. *Requests furthermore the States Parties to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property in the first trimester of 2027, in order to assess the implementation of the recommendations of the 2024 mission and re-evaluate whether the property meets the criteria for its inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in line with Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines;*

13. *Finally requests the States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2027** an updated joint report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 49th session.*

## 76. Wadden Sea (Denmark, Germany, Netherlands)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
2009

*Criteria*
(viii)(ix)(x)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
N/A

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1314/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 1 (from 1991-1991)
Total amount approved: USD 5,000
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1314/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
N/A

*Previous monitoring missions*
N/A

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*

- Climate change and severe weather events / Changes to oceanic waters / Other climate change impacts
- Physical resource extraction / Mining / Oil and gas (including salt extraction under and around the property)
- Fishing/collecting aquatic resources
- Major linear utilities / energy infrastructure (non-renewable and renewable) / Water infrastructure
- Marine transport infrastructure
- Coastal protection works
- Impacts of tourism/visitor/recreation
- Management systems/management plan (Strategic Environmental Assessment to assess cumulative impacts of programmes, plans and projects on the property's OUV and inform future management and decision-making)

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1314/

*Current conservation issues*

1. On 13 February 2026, the States Parties submitted a joint state of conservation report, available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1314/documents/, providing the following updates:

   a) Progress in addressing climate change impacts include the update of the Trilateral Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, expected to be adopted in 2026, as well as efforts to strengthen resilience and monitoring systems, including those for sedimentation and sea level rise;

   b) It is recalled that the nomination dossiers confirmed that no buffer zone would be established for the property, as its size and existing regulatory framework were considered sufficient to ensure protection and effective buffer functions;

   c) Effective management of the property requires balancing conservation objectives with key socio-economic sectors – fisheries, tourism, shipping and ports, energy, and coastal protection – which may exert pressures on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). Updates are provided on their management;

   d) A Trilateral Strategy on Renewable Energy Infrastructure has been developed to address the impacts of accelerated offshore and onshore renewable energy development; upon adoption in May 2026, it is to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre and IUCN together with the 2026 Esbjerg Declaration which would set out a high-level political commitment by the three States Parties to coordinated, long-term protection and sustainable management of the Wadden Sea;

   e) All three States Parties continue to apply environmental assessment requirements, including Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) under EU and national legislation, with increasing consideration of impacts on the OUV; in Germany, implementation of EU Directive 2023/2413 (RED III) may accelerate renewable energy permitting and influence applicable regulatory frameworks;

f) Progress on the joint SEA continues, including stakeholder consultation on the scoping report and expert review by the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment; national procurement procedures are foreseen in 2026, with completion expected by 2028;

g) In the Netherlands, gas extraction from the Ternaard field will not proceed following an agreement with the operators NAM and ExxonMobil, which will receive compensation and seek to amend their extraction permit to exclude this field; no new permits are envisaged; gas production at Ameland-East is suspended due to soil subsidence exceeding permitted levels;

h) Following the 2021 evaluation of the 'hand-on-tap' method regulating gas extraction and subsidence, the Netherlands commissioned updated studies on this approach and on natural sedimentation rates in tidal basins, incorporating long-term uncertainties; these confirm that the currently applied method is more conservative than the tested alternatives;

i) The Netherlands submitted a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) for the planned PAWOZ-Eemshaven offshore wind grid connections and will submit a further HIA in 2026 for the selected Schiermonnikoog Wantij route to the Centre and IUCN. In parallel, Germany has notified offshore grid planning, including initial soil investigations for routes crossing the property via Langeoog;

j) In Germany, the GEMS gas development has been authorised to proceed despite ongoing legal challenges, following approval in September 2025 to implement the permit granted in August 2024; while no significant impacts on the OUV are anticipated, installation of a submarine power cable resulted in damage to protected marine habitats outside the property.

2. On 5 February 2026, the World Heritage Centre transmitted third-party information to the State Party of Denmark, in accordance with Paragraph 174 of the Operational Guidelines, concerning reported dredging activities in the Grådyb tidal inlet and associated erosion affecting the Skallingen peninsula.

3. On 1 April 2026, the World Heritage Centre transmitted comments, jointly with IUCN, on the previously submitted draft scoping report for the joint SEA of the property, as requested by the Committee.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN*

4. Continued cooperation among the States Parties through the trilateral framework, as reflected in the detailed reporting on governance arrangements, cooperation mechanisms and procedural developments, is noted with appreciation. It is recommended that future reporting provide updates on the current condition and functioning of the key ecological processes underpinning the OUV of the property, in light of the persistent and interacting pressures affecting habitats, species and sediment dynamics. Climate change, in particular accelerated sea-level rise, remains a significant long-term threat to the property's geomorphological and ecological processes. While progress is reported in relation to monitoring and adaptation, greater emphasis is needed on understanding the interactions between climate change and other pressures, and on ensuring that these interactions are adequately reflected in planning and decision-making processes.

5. The decision not to proceed with gas extraction at the Ternaard field, which extends beneath the property, and the suspension of operations at Ameland-East following subsidence concerns, are noted positively. It remains essential to ensure that decisions relating to ongoing or future extractive activities, including the regulation of mining-induced subsidence, are guided by the long-term protection of the property's OUV, taking into account cumulative impacts and the increasing pressures associated with climate change.

6. Although updated assessments indicate that the current 'hand-on-tap' method regulating gas and salt extraction and associated subsidence remains more conservative than tested alternatives, caution is warranted in considering any future revisions. In the context of accelerating sea-level rise, uncertainties in the long-term balance between subsidence and sedimentation, and interacting pressures, any adjustment should apply the precautionary principle and ensure that ecological and geomorphological processes underpinning the property's OUV are not adversely affected.

7. In the context of the expansion of renewable energy development, the preparation of the Trilateral Strategy on Renewable Energy Infrastructure is welcomed; however, it should be submitted to the World Heritage Centre once adopted, and the States Parties should be invited to provide information on its implementation in future state of conservation reports in order to demonstrate that its implementation is fully aligned with the protection of the property's OUV. In addition, rigorous impact assessment of individual projects remains essential to ensure that they do not adversely affect the property's OUV, in line with Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines. In this regard, the States Parties are further encouraged to make use of the *Guidance on Wind and Solar Energy Projects in a World Heritage Context*.

8. The HIA for the PAWOZ-Eemshaven Programme indicates that significant impacts on the property's OUV cannot be ruled out, particularly in relation to sedimentation, turbidity, sound disturbance and associated effects on ecological processes and biodiversity, with uncertainties remaining regarding cumulative effects and the effectiveness of mitigation measures. The forthcoming HIA for the selected route will therefore be critical to demonstrate that adverse impacts on the property's OUV can be avoided or effectively minimised prior to any irreversible decisions. A similar level of rigour should be ensured in Germany's offshore grid planning, including proposed routes through the property via Langeoog, so as to avoid adverse impacts on the property's OUV.

9. Reported third-party information regarding dredging activities in the Grådyb tidal inlet and associated erosion affecting the Skallingen peninsula in Denmark raises concerns regarding potential impacts on sediment dynamics, geomorphological processes, and rare or characteristic habitats and species relevant to the property's OUV. This information therefore requires clarification by the State Party.

10. While national impact assessment processes are in place, they must ensure consistent assessment of potential impacts on the OUV across the transboundary property. In this regard, efforts to develop clearer and more consistent approaches to assessing potential impacts on the attributes underpinning the property's OUV are welcome and should support harmonised monitoring, impact assessment and decision-making across the property. The implementation by Germany of EU Directive 2023/2413, aimed at accelerating approvals for renewable energy projects, may reduce the scope or effectiveness of environmental assessment procedures. It is therefore essential that such regulatory streamlining does not compromise the full consideration of impacts on the property's OUV or the obligations of the States Parties under the World Heritage Convention.

11. The joint SEA remains central to understanding and addressing the cumulative impacts of the key pressures affecting the property and its wider setting. While progress is noted, its timely completion is essential to assess how these interacting pressures may affect the property's OUV, including in the context of climate change. Although existing national, EU and international legal frameworks provide protective functions, it remains unclear whether they are sufficient to address emerging cumulative pressures associated with ongoing and proposed developments, including large-scale energy transition infrastructure. The SEA should therefore evaluate whether additional protective measures, including a formal buffer zone or other mechanisms, may be necessary to ensure the long-term protection of the property's OUV. Furthermore, while the SEA scoping report reviewed by the World Heritage Centre and IUCN demonstrates an appropriate focus on the OUV, it does not yet define baseline conditions or identify stakeholders to be engaged, and further refinement of these elements is required as the SEA progresses.

12. Overall, while progress is noted, the information provided by the States Parties confirms that the property continues to face multiple interacting pressures, including climate change, extractive activities, energy infrastructure and other uses within the property and its wider setting. In this regard, it is noted that a publicly issued independent advisory opinion of the Dutch Ecological Authority, prepared to inform the development of a new national policy framework for nature in the Wadden Sea by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature, concludes that the combined effects of these pressures indicate increasing stress on the Wadden Sea ecosystem. The opinion suggests that cumulative impacts may be approaching critical thresholds, with human activities potentially exceeding the ecological carrying capacity of the Wadden Sea and emphasises the need for timely action.

13. Given the continuing uncertainty regarding cumulative impacts on the property's OUV, the indications of increasing ecosystem stress and potential ecological degradation, and the fact

that completion of the joint SEA is not foreseen before 2028, it is recommended that the Committee request the States Parties to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property. Such a mission would provide an independent, on-site assessment of the current state of conservation of the property, with a focused mandate to examine the effectiveness of existing management, governance and assessment frameworks in addressing cumulative impacts and multiple interacting pressures affecting the property. It would also provide guidance on priority actions required to ensure the effective long-term protection of the property's OUV.

***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.76***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decisions **45 COM 7B.23**, **46 COM 7B.51** and **47 COM 7B.22**, adopted at its extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023), 46th (New Delhi, 2024) and 47th (UNESCO, 2025) sessions respectively,*

3. *Appreciates the States Parties' trilateral efforts in the joint management of the property and their continued cooperation in addressing key conservation challenges affecting its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), and encourages the States Parties to further strengthen transboundary coordination;*

4. *Welcomes the progress reported in relation to climate change adaptation and monitoring, including the update of the Trilateral Climate Change Adaptation Strategy; however, notes with concern the increasing interactions between climate change and other pressures affecting the property, and requests the States Parties to ensure that the combined effects of these pressures are comprehensively addressed in planning, impact assessments and decision-making processes, so as to safeguard the property's OUV;*

5. *Notes with appreciation the confirmation from the State Party of the Netherlands that the gas extraction project in the Ternaard field, which extends beneath the property, will not proceed, as well as the suspension of operations at Ameland-East, and also requests the States Parties to ensure that ongoing and future extractive activities do not adversely affect the property's OUV, taking into account cumulative and long-term impacts, including those related to climate change, and to continue to provide updates on individual projects to the World Heritage Centre, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;*

6. *Notes the conclusions of the new studies on the "hand-on-tap" method used to regulate gas and salt extraction and associated subsidence, which indicate that the currently applied approach is conservative, and further requests the States Parties to ensure that any future adjustments to this method are undertaken in accordance with the precautionary principle and do not adversely affect the property's OUV;*

7. *Also welcomes the development of a Trilateral Strategy on Renewable Energy Infrastructure and requests furthermore the States Parties to submit it to the World Heritage Centre once adopted; also notes with concern that planned renewable energy infrastructure projects may affect the property's OUV, and requests moreover:*

    a) *the States Parties to provide information on the implementation of the Trilateral Strategy in future state of conservation reports, in order to demonstrate that it is being implemented in a manner fully consistent with the protection of the property's OUV;*

b) *the State Party of the Netherlands to ensure, through the forthcoming Heritage Impact Assessment process for the selected Schiermonnikoog Wantij route within the PAWOZ-Eemshaven programme, that potential adverse impacts on the property's OUV are adequately assessed and mitigated prior to making any decisions that are difficult to reverse,*

c) *the State Party of Germany to ensure that the impacts of its offshore grid planning, including the proposed routing through the property via Langeoog, are appropriately assessed and that adverse impacts on the property's OUV are avoided;*

8. *Reiterates its previous requests to the States Parties to ensure that impact assessments are undertaken for all relevant planned and proposed activities and developments within and around the property that may impact the property's OUV, in accordance with Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines and the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, and also encourages the use of the Guidance on Wind and Solar Energy Projects in a World Heritage Context, and continued efforts towards a consistent and harmonised approach to impact assessments across the transboundary property, including through a common approach to assessing potential impacts on the property's OUV, supported by measurable indicators;*

9. *Requests the States Parties to ensure that the implementation of national or regional frameworks, including EU Directive 2023/2413 aimed at accelerating approvals for renewable energy projects, does not compromise the protection of the property's OUV, or the effective application of impact assessment procedures under the Convention;*

10. *Also requests the State Party of Denmark to provide clarification regarding reported dredging activities in the Grådyb tidal inlet and the associated erosion affecting the Skallingen peninsula, including any potential implications for sediment dynamics, geomorphological processes, and rare or characteristic habitats and species that contribute to the property's OUV;*

11. *Also notes the progress in the development of the joint Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) but, noting that its completion is not foreseen before 2028, also reiterates its previous request for the States Parties to prioritise its completion and further requests the State Parties to ensure that its findings effectively inform planning and decision-making concerning ongoing and future developments, that the SEA evaluate whether additional protective measures, including a formal buffer zone or other mechanisms, may be required to ensure the protection of the property's OUV;*

12. *Expresses concern regarding the continuing uncertainty surrounding the cumulative impacts of multiple pressures affecting the property's OUV, as well as indications of increasing ecosystem stress and ecological degradation, and requests furthermore the States Parties to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property in 2027 to assess the state of conservation of the property specifically in relation that to cumulative impacts on its OUV, with a focus on the effectiveness of existing management, governance and assessment frameworks in addressing multiple interacting pressures, and to provide guidance on priority actions required to ensure the effective long-term protection of the property's OUV;*

13. *Requests moreover the States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2027**, an interim report on the implementation of the above, including updated information on the condition and trends of the attributes underpinning the property's OUV, in order to support the preparation of the aforementioned mission;*

14. *Finally requests the States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2027**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 50th session.*

## 78. Central Sikhote-Alin (Russian Federation)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
2001

*Criteria*
(x)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
N/A

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/766/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 0
Total amount approved: USD 0
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/766/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
N/A

*Previous monitoring missions*
N/A

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*
- Management systems/management plan (need to finalise and implement the Integrated Management Plan and strengthen coordinated management of all component parts of the property)
- Legal framework (incomplete process of designation and formalisation of buffer zones for all component parts of the property)

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/766/

*Current conservation issues*
1. In response to Committee Decision **45 COM 7B.94**, the State Party submitted an updated report on the state of conservation of the property on 29 November 2024, available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/766/documents/. The World Heritage Centre and IUCN considered that the previously raised third-party concerns regarding reported mining-related activities at the Glukhoe subsoil plot, located within the buffer zone of the property, remained unaddressed in the report. In a letter dated 7 April 2025, the World Heritage Centre therefore requested the State Party to clarify the exact location of the mining site in relation to the property's boundaries, provide a supporting map, respond in detail to the concerns raised, undertake a comprehensive impact assessment of these activities in accordance with the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*, and submit an updated state of conservation report by 1 December 2025.
2. Following the State Party submission of an updated report on 2 December 2025, on 17 December 2025, the World Heritage Centre informed the State Party that the report (available at the same link) did not address the above-mentioned issue and reiterated its request for the relevant

information to be provided by 1 February 2026, which were subsequently received on 13 January 2026.

3. The updated 2025 report and the comments received on 13 January 2026 report the following:

   a) A licence (VLV 006112 BP) for geological exploration, including the prospecting and evaluation of gold ore deposits at the Glukhoe subsoil plot, was issued in August 2022 and is valid until August 2027; the approved project documentation includes environmental protection measures, however, the license does not authorise mining operations;

   b) Following the identification of violations of the licence conditions, procedures have been initiated that may lead to its early termination, including a formal notification requiring the operator to eliminate the violations within six months;

   c) The competent authorities further consider exploration and mining activities involving logging or the installation of geological infrastructure in the upper reaches of watercourses to be unacceptable, and this position has been communicated to the licence holder;

   d) Monitoring undertaken by the authorities of the Sikhote-Alin Strict Nature Reserve indicates that current activities are being conducted along existing clearings, that associated infrastructure is located outside the reserve, and that no pollution incidents or other violations have been recorded; current activities therefore do not violate the reserve's protection regime;

   e) Coordination among the component parts of the serial property continues through the inter-institutional Coordination Council, alongside ongoing ecological monitoring, scientific research, and conservation and protection activities across the property;

   f) The buffer zone of the Sikhote-Alin Strict Nature Reserve is considered adequate in size and configuration to protect the property from external threats, with monitoring data indicating no negative impacts on ecosystems arising from activities outside its boundaries;

   g) The process of establishing a buffer zone for the Bikin National Park (Bikin River Valley component) is ongoing; the justification for its establishment has been completed, proposed boundaries have been defined, and draft buffer zone regulations have been prepared;

   h) The extension of the Sikhote-Alin Nature Reserve to improve habitat connectivity, including for the Amur tiger, is progressing, with the scientific justification, boundary surveys and supporting documentation having been completed; the proposal is currently under review by the relevant authorities;

   i) Implementation of the national strategy for the conservation of the Amur tiger continues, supported by relevant legislation. According to the 2022 comprehensive census, the Amur tiger population has doubled over the preceding 12 years and now stands at approximately 750 individuals;

   j) Measures relating to tourism management, visitor monitoring, environmental education, fire prevention and outreach activities continue to be implemented in support of the long-term protection of the property and sustainable visitor use, including through a revised Ecotourism Strategy for the Sikhote-Alin Nature Reserve (2024-2030), which defines permitted activities and includes measures to monitor and control the impacts of tourism and recreational use;

   k) In Bikin National Park, preserving the cultural rights and traditional resource-use rights of Indigenous Peoples remains a primary management objective.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN*

4. The continued implementation of management and conservation measures across the property by the responsible management authorities is noted with appreciation. In order to further strengthen the integrated management of the serial property, as previously requested by the Committee, the State Party should consider extending key strategic and management documents, including the Ecotourism Strategy currently applicable to the Sikhote-Alin Nature Reserve, to encompass the property as a whole in line with the Committee request.

5. The Glukhoe licence and the ongoing geological exploration activities within the property's buffer zone, as well as the identified violations of licence conditions, are noted with serious concern. Any mining-related activity, including geological exploration, in close proximity to the property poses potentially significant environmental risks to its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). The exploration area appears to be located upstream of the property and could adversely affect critical waterbodies and ecological connectivity that is important for the Amur tiger and other large mammals, which are key attributes of the property's OUV. Recalling the Committee's previous concerns regarding habitat connectivity, large-scale logging and the associated expansion of forest roads along the property's boundaries, these developments raise further concerns regarding the effectiveness of the regulatory framework and buffer zone in protecting the property from external threats, particularly should the exploration activities ultimately lead to mining operations.

6. The State Party should ensure that there are no violations of mining licence conditions, and that no mining-related activities in the vicinity of the property are undertaken until a comprehensive impact assessment of the potential impacts of any such activities on the OUV of the property has been conducted in accordance with the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context* and submitted to the World Heritage Centre. Activities that may adversely affect the property's OUV should not be authorised. The Committee may further recall that any weakening of the legal protection regime applicable to the property or its buffer zone in order to facilitate mining-related activities would be incompatible with the protection requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines.

7. Furthermore, whilst noting the State Party's continued commitment to advancing the establishment of buffer zones for all component parts of the property and the extension of the Sikhote-Alin Strict Nature Reserve, it is regrettable that the formal designation of an adequate buffer zone, including for the Bikin National Park (Bikin River Valley component), as repeatedly requested by the Committee since the property's extension in 2018 (Decision **42 COM 8B.9**) has yet to be completed. In light of the ongoing mineral exploration, and the subsequent potential expansion of mining operations in the vicinity of the property, the establishment of an adequate and fully operational buffer zone should be concluded as a matter of priority. Similarly, the Committee may wish to reiterate its request to the State Party to expedite the extension of the Sikhote-Alin Strict Nature Reserve and to submit a proposal for a minor boundary modification in order to align the World Heritage property with the extended reserve and formally designate the buffer zone for the entire property under the Convention. These measures remain essential to strengthen ecological connectivity, improve protection from external threats and ensure the long-term conservation of the property's OUV.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.78***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decisions **42 COM 8B.9**, **44 COM 7B.105** and **45 COM 7B.94**, adopted at its 42nd (Manama, 2018), extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021) and extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023) sessions respectively,*

3. *Notes with appreciation the continued implementation of management and conservation measures across the property, including coordination among the component parts of the serial property through the inter-agency Coordinating Council, ongoing ecological monitoring and research, tourism management, conservation measures in support of the Amur tiger, and environmental education and cultural activities;*

4. *Encourages the State Party to continue strengthening the integrated management of the serial property, including by extending key strategic and management instruments, including the Ecotourism Strategy, as appropriate, to encompass all component parts of the property;*

5. *Notes with serious concern the ongoing mineral exploration activities undertaken under the Glukhoe subsoil licence within the buffer zone of the property, including in areas that may affect critical upstream waterbodies and ecological integrity and connectivity, as well as the reported violations of the licence conditions, urges the State Party to ensure that there are no violations of mining conditions, and that no mining-related activities are undertaken until a comprehensive impact assessment has been carried out in line with the* Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context *and submitted to the World Heritage Centre, and stresses that such activities which may adversely affect the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property should not be authorised;*

6. *Also recalls that any weakening of the legal protection regime applicable to the property or its buffer zone in order to facilitate mining-related activities would be incompatible with the protection requirements of the Operational Guidelines;*

7. *Noting that an adequate and fully operational buffer zone is needed to protect the property from external threats, reiterates its request to the State Party to ensure that the process of designating an adequate buffer zone for the property is undertaken in a coordinated manner across all component parts and to finalise the formal designation of buffer zones for the whole property, consistent with the requirements of the Operational Guidelines and in line with Decision **42 COM 8B.9**, welcomes the State Party's continued commitment to advance this work, and urges its completion as a matter of priority;*

8. *Also reiterates its request to the State Party to finalise the extension of the Sikhote-Alin Strict Nature Reserve and, once completed under national legislation, to submit a proposal for a minor boundary modification to align the boundaries of the World Heritage property with those of the extended reserve and to formalise under the Convention the buffer zones designated for all component parts of the property;*

9. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2027**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 50th session.*

## 80. Lake Baikal (Russian Federation)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
1996

*Criteria*
(vii)(viii)(ix)(x)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
N/A

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/754/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 2 (from 1990-2000)
Total amount approved: USD 33,200
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/754/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
N/A

*Previous monitoring missions*
July 1997: World Heritage Centre mission; 1998: World Heritage Centre monitoring mission; September 2001, October 2005 and December 2023: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring missions; November 2003 and July 2011: joint UNESCO/IUCN high-level missions; April 2015: IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*
- Gas and oil pipeline project across the World Heritage property in 2006 (issue resolved)
- Management Systems/Management Plan (lack of adequate management system)
- Legal framework (insufficient legal protection)
- Surface water pollution (pollution from paper mill and domestic and industrial wastewater)
- Land use change and conversion and use of natural resources (timber harvesting, construction on the lake shore, sale of land)
- Impacts of tourism/visitor/recreation (large scale tourism development)
- Fire (wildfires) and impacts of climate change
- Water infrastructure (existing and planned dam infrastructure in the Russian Federation and Mongolia affecting Lake Baikal water regime)
- Illegal activities

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/754/

*Current conservation issues*

1. On 31 January 2026, the State Party submitted a report on the state of conservation of the property, available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/754/documents. The State Party shared additional information on 27 February 2026 in response to the World Heritage Centre's letter of 10 February 2026 requesting clarification on information required under Decision **47 COM 7B.26**. The State Party reports the following:

    a) Environmental monitoring for Lake Baikal includes various environmental factors (e.g. water, air, soil biodiversity), with results publicly available through an online geoportal;

    b) Hydrochemical monitoring for 2024 indicates generally stable water quality parameters for Lake Baikal, although local pressures are reported in areas influenced by settlements and wastewater discharges; algal blooms, particularly of *Spirogyra*, continue to be detected;

    c) Wastewater discharges are regulated in accordance with national standards. No industrial facilities are reported to discharge directly into Lake Baikal. Inspections of wastewater treatment facilities have identified cases of non-compliance with environmental requirements, with follow-up measures being implemented;

    d) Remediation of accumulated environmental damage on the territory of the former Baikalsk Pulp and Paper Mill (BPPM) continues, including waste treatment, dismantling of infrastructure and land reclamation, and is scheduled for completion in 2027;

    e) National programmes and projects are being implemented to address wastewater treatment, waste management, air quality and forest restoration within the Baikal Natural Territory (BNT). In 2025, five unauthorised waste disposal sites within specially protected areas were eliminated;

    f) Tourism continues to increase, accompanied by the development of related infrastructure and growing demands on waste-management systems. Regulatory frameworks for tourism management and environmental control are reported to be in place;

    g) Forest fires remain a significant risk, with increasingly extensive areas affected in recent years. Reforestation measures are ongoing, with the majority relying on natural regeneration;

    h) Legislative amendments to the Federal Law 'On the Protection of Lake Baikal', adopted in December 2025 (entering into force in March 2026), introduce new provisions concerning forest management within the Central Ecological Zone (CEZ) (which coincides with the

boundaries of the property), including sanitary clear-cutting, infrastructure development, and land-use changes. A new 'Commission for Ensuring the Protection of Lake Baikal and the Socio-Economic Development of the Baikal Natural Territory' has been established to coordinate the implementation of these measures;

i) Regulation of water levels continues under the temporary decree 'On the Maximum and Minimum Water Levels in Lake Baikal in 2025-2027' until the advice provided by the World Heritage Centre and IUCN (December 2025) is reviewed;

j) Transboundary cooperation with Mongolia continues under the 2024 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the protection of Lake Baikal and Selenga River basin. A comprehensive impact assessment of the Egiin Gol Hydroelectric Power Station is in preparation by end of 2026;

k) The proposed Power of Siberia-2 pipeline in the BNT is frozen;

l) The requested joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission (Decisions **47 COM 7B.26** and **46 COM 7B.52**) has been invited for August 2026.

2. On 22 December 2025, the World Heritage Centre transmitted a letter to the State Party conveying feedback from the Centre and IUCN on the study concerning the environmental and socio-economic impacts of the water-level regime of Lake Baikal. The letter also relayed concerns raised by third parties regarding the legislative amendments to the Federal Law "On the Protection of Lake Baikal". In light of these concerns, the World Heritage Centre informed the State Party that the state of conservation of the property would be examined by the World Heritage Committee at its current session, rather than at its 49th session, and invited the submission of a full state of conservation report, including responses to the issues raised through third-party submissions.

3. On 30 January 2026, the State Party of Mongolia submitted updated information on the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for the proposed Egiin Gol Hydropower Plant project, including documentation on its progress, methodology, and organisational framework. The ESIA is to consider downstream impacts on Lake Baikal, be conducted in compliance with the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context* (Guidance and Toolkit), and reflect updates to the project design intended to manage flows in the Selenge River and mitigate the potential adverse impacts on biodiversity identified in previous studies.

4. On 13 February 2026, the World Heritage Centre transmitted a letter to the State Party regarding proposed legislative amendments to the national Law 'On Specially Protected Natural Areas', submitted to the State Duma in December 2025, which may have a negative impact on the protection of natural World Heritage properties in the Russian Federation.

5. On 19 March 2026, the State Party informed the World Heritage Centre of the planned organisation of the Baikal International Environmental Congress, scheduled to take place in September 2026.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN*

6. The property is being brought to the attention of the Committee at the present session, rather than at its 49th session in 2027 as foreseen in Decision **47 COM 7B.26**, following concerns regarding amendments to the Federal Law 'On the Protection of Lake Baikal' (Baikal Law), approved in December 2025. Since 2021, the Committee has repeatedly noted that the weakening of the property's legal protection, in the context of its deteriorating ecological condition, could place the property in potential danger, in line with Paragraph 180(b)(i) and (iv) of the Operational Guidelines. It has urged the State Party to secure and stabilise the property's legal status, to assess the impact of any proposed legislative changes prior to their adoption, and to avoid amendments that may adversely affect its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

7. The 2023 mission observed that the numerous and frequent legal amendments had already reduced the predictability, consistency and security of the legal framework. The mission reviewed the draft amendments to the Baikal Law and concluded that they would not provide sufficient guarantees for preserving the property's OUV and were therefore incompatible with its protection requirements. The adopted amendments did not address these concerns and were approved without the prior review requested by the Committee (Decision **46 COM 7B.52**). Consequently,

they weaken the property's legal protection, reinforcing concerns identified by the mission and the Committee regarding the conditions for inscription in the List of World Heritage in Danger.

8. The 2025 amendments to the Baikal Law raise several concerns as they introduce exceptions to the previously stricter protection regime. Firstly, while a general ban on clear-cutting is retained, sanitary clear-cutting of damaged forest stands is authorised under certain conditions. However, the scientific criteria for determining when forests have lost their ecological functions to justify such operations have yet to be established. Compared to selective cutting, clear-cutting also allows the removal of timber from the forest. There is concern that operations enabled through these amendments, such as large-scale mechanical forest removal and subsequent reforestation, could severely impact the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, resulting in soil erosion, increased sedimentation, pollutant runoff and nutrient loading. Furthermore, forest fragmentation may increase vulnerability to wildfires.

9. Secondly, the amended law authorises changes to settlements and their boundaries within the property, as well as the transfer of protected forest land for other uses, including the development of infrastructure such as dams, coastal protection structures, roads and service facilities. Unlike earlier versions of the legislative proposal, which referred to specific areas and infrastructure needs, the adopted law does not identify the locations, extent or projects to which these provisions may apply. This limits the ability to assess their potential cumulative impacts on the property's OUV and reduces the predictability of the protection regime. While compensatory reforestation or afforestation is required, the location and methods remain undefined. It is also recalled that adverse impacts on OUV cannot be offset. A comprehensive, science-based assessment of the potential impact of the legislative changes on the property's OUV is therefore urgently required, with the involvement of relevant experts, including the Russian Academy of Sciences.

10. At the same time, the temporary water-level regulation regime continues to allow variations exceeding one metre for hydropower production, despite the Committee's repeated requests to the State Party to refrain from renewing such derogations due to their potential negative impacts, pending the establishment of a permanent regulatory framework compatible with the protection of the property's (Decisions **44 COM 7B.107, 46 COM 7B.52**).

11. The governance mechanism established through the amended Baikal Law remains unclear, particularly regarding how decisions of the new governmental commission will be informed, including approval of forest clear-cutting in the absence of established scientific criteria defining when forests have lost their ecosystem functions. Together with shortcomings in environmental impact assessments identified by the mission, this uncertainty undermines the effectiveness of the management system required under the Operational Guidelines (Paragraphs 108-118bis). Noting also that no progress has been reported since 2024 on the Government Commission for the Protection of Lake Baikal, established in 2019, the mandate, decision-making authority and relationship of this new commission to existing governance mechanisms remain insufficiently defined.

12. It is also noted that other regulatory developments may have implications for the protection of the property. Government Decree No. 198 of 27 February 2026 establishing the tourist and recreational Special Economic Zone (SEZ) 'Baikal Coast' within the Slyudyansky municipal district of the Irkutsk region (available at http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202603020028) creates a third SEZ within the property, while the cumulative impacts of existing SEZs have not yet been assessed, despite repeated Committee requests since 2015. The amended 2025 Baikal Law prohibits the creation of new SEZs, but it does not appear to regulate modifications to the boundaries of existing SEZs. In addition, proposed amendments to the Federal Law 'On Specially Protected Natural Areas' (2026) could, if adopted, adversely affect the property by expanding the legal basis for infrastructure development, resource extraction and boundary modifications.

13. In conclusion, the 2025 amendments to the Baikal Law represent a significant further weakening of the property's protection and increase the risk of adverse impacts on its OUV. As noted by the 2023 mission, this occurs at a time when the property is already facing significant and growing anthropogenic pressures, including pollution, changes in land-use, water level regulation, large-scale tourism development, and the impacts of climate change, while the ecological condition of Lake Baikal has deteriorated. The Committee has previously identified this as a major risk justifying the property's inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger (Decisions **44 COM 7B.107**, **45 COM 7B.24**, **46 COM 7B.52** and **47 COM 7B.26**). In this context, the World Heritage Centre and IUCN consider that, following the adoption of the legislative amendments, the property

is facing both ascertained and potential dangers and that the conditions set out in Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger are met. It is therefore recommended that the Committee **inscribe the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger**.

14. The requested joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission should provide an updated assessment of the state of conservation of the property, including in light of the full implications of the 2025 legislative amendments for the OUV of the property, review progress in implementing the 2023 mission recommendations, and provide technical advice to support the State Party in developing, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and IUCN, a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR), together with a set of corrective measures. These should aim to restore and secure the property's legal protection regime, identify targeted regulatory tools to address socio-economic needs of local communities without compromising the property's protection, strengthen management effectiveness, and ensure that any forestry operations, land-use changes, and tourism or infrastructure development within the property do not negatively impact its OUV.

15. Notwithstanding the above, the State Party reports continued measures to address environmental degradation of the property, including the ongoing remediation of the former BPPM (anticipated completion in 2027), programmes on wastewater treatment and waste management within the BNT, and the monitoring of lake parameters, which are appreciated. The State Party should ensure the full implementation of the 2023 mission recommendations, including the safe elimination of accumulated environmental damage at the former BPPM and the development of proposals for water-level regulation in Lake Baikal that are compatible with the protection of the property and informed by the scientific study, to be finalised based on the Technical Review by the World Heritage Centre and IUCN. While the proposed Power of Siberia-2 gas pipeline remains on hold, it is recommended the State Party keep the World Heritage Centre informed of any developments that may impact the property's OUV.

16. The updated information provided by the State Party of Mongolia regarding the ESIA for the proposed Egiin Gol Hydropower Plant is noted, and the State Party is requested to submit the final ESIA to the World Heritage Centre. It is also recommended the States Parties continue to report on progress in implementing the 2024 MoU, including cooperation to improve the ecological condition of the Selenga River, the largest tributary of Lake Baikal, which sustains the Selenga Delta within the property.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.80***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3*

2. *Recalling Decisions **44 COM 7B.107**, **45 COM 7B.24**, **46 COM 7B.52** and **47 COM 7B.26**, adopted at its extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021), extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023), 46th (New Delhi, 2024) and 47th (UNESCO, 2025) sessions, respectively,*

3. *Takes note that the State Party reports the continued implementation of measures to address environmental degradation of the property, including the ongoing remediation of the former Baikalsk Pulp and Paper Mill, programmes addressing wastewater treatment and waste management within the Baikal Natural Territory, and the continued monitoring of lake parameters;*

4. *Expresses its utmost concern that the amendments to the Federal Law 'On the Protection of Lake Baikal' approved in December 2025, constitute a weakening of the property's legal protection at a time when it is already facing significant and growing anthropogenic pressures, including pollution, changes in land-use, water level regulation, large-scale tourism development, and the impacts of climate change, while the ecological condition of Lake Baikal has deteriorated, as confirmed by the 2023*

*Reactive Monitoring mission, thereby increasing the risk of adverse impacts on its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), and considers that the property is facing both ascertained and potential dangers in accordance with Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines;*

5. ***Decides therefore to inscribe Lake Baikal (Russian Federation) on the List of World Heritage in Danger;***

6. *Requests the State Party to develop, in close consultation with the World Heritage Centre and IUCN, a proposal for a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR), together with a set of corrective measures, aimed at restoring and securing adequate legal protection regime, identifying targeted regulatory tools that address socio-economic needs of local communities, strengthening effective management and enforcement, preventing activities with negative impacts on the property's OUV, and addressing the environmental degradation of the property;*

7. *Urges the State Party to undertake a comprehensive, science-based assessment of the potential impacts of recent and proposed changes to the legal protection regime on the property's OUV, in particular the amendments to the Federal Law 'On the Protection of Lake Baikal', involving relevant expert bodies, including the Russian Academy of Sciences, and to identify and implement the measures required to ensure effective long-term protection of the property;*

8. *Welcomes the invitation by the State Party for a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property in August 2026, and also requests the mission to provide technical advice on the preparation of the DSOCR and corrective measures, and to assess the property's current state of conservation, including in light of the full implications of the 2025 legislative amendments for the OUV of the property, and progress in implementing the remaining recommendations of the 2023 Reactive Monitoring mission;*

9. *Reiterates its request to the State Party that all Special Economic Zones (SEZs) within the property be subject to comprehensive cumulative impact assessments, in line with the Operational Guidelines and previous Committee decisions, and that all project-specific Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA) be undertaken in line with the* Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*;*

10. *Further requests the State Party to provide detailed information on the location, scope and planned development within the property of the third SEZ 'Baikal Coast', established under a Government Decree in February 2026, including an assessment of its potential direct and cumulative impacts on the property's OUV;*

11. *Notes with serious concern that the water level of Lake Baikal continues to be regulated under renewed temporary legislation allowing increased variations, which could have negative impacts on the property and its OUV, and urges the State Party to:*

    a) *Update the study on the environmental and socio-economic impacts of the water level regime of Lake Baikal, taking into account the review by the World Heritage Centre and IUCN,*

    b) *As a precautionary measure, refrain from authorising water level variations exceeding the legally established one metre until new legislative proposals and management regulations have been developed, informed by the scientific study, reviewed by the World Heritage Centre and IUCN, and confirmed to be compatible with the protection of the property's OUV;*

12. *Also reiterates its request to the State Party to continue implementing the recommendations of the 2023 Reactive Monitoring mission, including the safe elimination of the accumulated environmental damage at the former Baikalsk Pulp and Paper Mill;*

13. *Notes with appreciation the initiation of the ESIA for the Egiin Gol Hydropower Plant project by the State Party of Mongolia to assess potential downstream impacts of the project on the OUV of the property, in line with the* Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*, and its anticipated finalisation in 2026, and reiterates its request to the State Party of Mongolia to submit the ESIA to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN prior to taking any decision;*

14. *Requests furthermore the States Parties of the Russian Federation and Mongolia to continue implementing the 2024 Memorandum of Understanding, including cooperation to improve the ecological condition of the Selenga River, and to ensure that an update is included in the next state of conservation report;*

15. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2027**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 49th session.*

## 81. Volcanoes of Kamchatka (Russian Federation)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
1996

*Criteria*
(vii)(viii)(ix)(x)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
N/A

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/765/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 0
Total amount approved: USD 0
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/765/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
N/A

*Previous monitoring missions*
September 1997: IUCN mission; February 2001: UNESCO mission; May 2004: UNESCO-IUCN mission; April 2006: IUCN Retrospective Inventory mission; August/September 2007 and August 2019: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring missions

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*
- Illegal activities (illegal salmon fishing)
- Mining (gold mining)
- Major linear utilities (gas pipeline)
- Renewable energy facilities (development of a geothermal power station)
- Fires (wildfires)

- Management and institutional factors (boundary changes)
- Governance (lack of management structure and coordination system)
- Ground transport infrastructure (construction of the Esso-Palana road)
- Legal framework (need for the development of a comprehensive national legal framework for the protection and management of natural properties)
- Decline in populations of wild reindeer and snow sheep
- Impacts of tourism/visitor/recreation (major visitor accommodation and associated infrastructure: impacts of proposed tourism infrastructure development 'Three Volcanoes Park')
- Management systems/management plan

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/765/

*Current conservation issues*

1. On 30 January 2026, the State Party submitted a report on the state of conservation of the property, available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/765/documents/, reporting the following:

    a) The implementation of measures to improve the management system of the property continues, supported by the Council on the Management and Protection of the Property. The development of a unified management plan has been initiated;

    b) Progress is being made towards the establishment of the federally managed Volcanoes of Kamchatka National Park, based on the existing South Kamchatka and Kluchevskoy Nature Parks, which are currently under regional administration. A draft Government resolution to formalise this change is reported to be at the final stage of approval;

    c) Arrangements for the legal protection of areas of the property not included within the proposed National Park boundaries are foreseen through the establishment of a protected zone following the Park's designation, in accordance with national legislation;

    d) The establishment of buffer zones for the Bystrinsky and Nalychevo Nature Park components of the property is planned for 2026-2028, including the clarification of their boundaries as defined at the time of inscription;

    e) Information on the boundaries, zoning and regulations for the nature park components of the property is set out in existing regional legal instruments, including functional zoning frameworks that provide for special protection zones, regulated tourism and recreation zones, and economic zones;

    f) The revised Three Volcanoes Park tourism development project is proposed to be located outside the boundaries of the property, in the Paratunka River valley, and no land plots within the property have been allocated for this project. The project's master plan remains under review, and further information will be provided following its approval;

    g) Work on tourism management measures continue, including the development of tourism master plans for two of the six components, a strategy for ecotourism in the South of Kamchatka, certification of routes, the preparation of route passports, and the determination of maximum permissible recreational capacity for selected components of the property.

2. On 19 March 2026, the State Party extended a new invitation for a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to take place in September 2026.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN*

3. The continued implementation of measures to improve the management system of the property is noted with appreciation, including efforts to enhance coordination through the Council on the Management and Protection. The preparation of an integrated management plan and corresponding standard for the property as a whole, in line with the Operational Guidelines, remains a key priority, as emphasised by the 2007 and 2019 Reactive Monitoring missions and reiterated in subsequent decisions of the Committee.

4. While noting the confirmation that the Three Volcanoes Park would be located outside the boundaries of the property, and that the master plan remains under review and will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre once approved, it should be recalled that the Committee has

requested detailed information on its design, location and spatial relationship to the property. The Committee has further requested that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) be prepared and submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN prior to any approval or implementation. Given the strategic nature of the master plan, such an assessment would be more appropriately undertaken as a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This would not, however, preclude the need for subsequent project-level EIAs for individual developments arising from the plan.

5. The development of tourism master plans for the Nalychevo and Bystrinsky Nature Park components, together with the preparation of an ecotourism development strategy for Southern Kamchatka and the initiation of studies to determine maximum permissible recreational capacity for selected components, is noted as a positive step towards improving visitor management. However, the absence of a comprehensive Tourism Development Master Plan for the property as a whole, based on consolidated and comparable data and including clearly defined carrying capacity thresholds consistent with the conservation of the OUV, limits the ability to assess cumulative and long-term impacts across the property. The preparation of such an integrated plan should therefore be prioritised and expedited.

6. While progress in clarifying boundaries, zoning and regulations of protected areas, and in establishing buffer zones, is noted, the absence of information on the timeline for completing this long-standing work, as well as on the legal status, boundaries and permitted activities within these areas, limits the ability to assess the effectiveness of the protection regime in safeguarding the property's OUV. The State Party should therefore complete this work and provide the outstanding information as a matter of priority, in line with the Committee's previous requests and the recommendations of the 2019 mission regarding the strengthening of zoning arrangements and the establishment of effective buffer zones. It is also noted that the Committee has consistently maintained since the 2019 mission that development proposals should not drive modifications to property boundaries or weaken protection regimes.

7. It is recalled that, since 2021 (Decision **44 COM 7B.109**), the Committee has expressed concern regarding the modification of the boundaries of the South Kamchatka Nature Park (SKNP), adopted through a 2021 Decree, which removed legal protection from part of the property. The proposed establishment of the Volcanoes of Kamchatka National Park therefore offers an important, concrete opportunity to restore and strengthen the legal protection of the property and to respond to the Committee's long-standing request to strengthen the protection regime of the existing regional South Kamchatka and Kluchevskoy Nature Parks, which has been highlighted since the 2007 Reactive Monitoring mission and related Decision (**32 COM 7B.23**). In this regard it is recalled that the Committee has continued to repeatedly request the State Party to ensure that the entire property as inscribed is included in the National Park (Decisions **46 COM 7B.53** and **47 COM 7B.29**). While the State Party reports that the draft resolution establishing the National Park is at the final stage of approval and that a protected zone is envisaged for those parts of the property not included within the National Park, this falls short of the Committee's requests. The Committee explicitly requested in Decision **47 COM 7B.29**, that the proposed Volcanoes of Kamchatka National Park fully encompass the entire area of the South Kamchatka and Kluchevskoy Nature Parks as inscribed, including the Vilyuchinskaya and Zhirovaya Bays, which contain attributes contributing to the property's OUV, and that confirmation of this be provided by 1 February 2026.

8. In line with the Committee's repeated requests, the World Heritage Centre and IUCN have consistently underlined that the exclusion of Vilyuchinskaya and Zhirovaya Bays from the SKNP, and the resulting removal of legal protection from part of the property, is a matter of serious concern and constitutes a clear potential danger to the property, as defined under Paragraph 180(b) (i) of the Operational Guidelines. It is therefore recommended that the Committee request the State Party to confirm, by **1 February 2027**, that the final Volcanoes of Kamchatka National Park fully encompasses the entire area of the South Kamchatka and Kluchevskoy Nature Parks, as included in the property at the time of inscription, including the Vilyuchinskaya and Zhirovaya Bays, and to provide by that date clear and comprehensive evidence demonstrating that this has been achieved. In the absence of such confirmation, the Committee should consider that the continued absence of legal protection of part of the property constitutes a potential danger to the property, warranting its inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, as foreseen under Paragraph 180(b)(i) of the Operational Guidelines.

9. The joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission invited again by the State Party is envisaged once current logistical constraints permit. However, the World Heritage Centre and IUCN consider that an assessment of the adequacy of the property's legal protection, as well as the compatibility of proposed tourism-related developments with the conservation of OUV, does not require substantiation through the pending mission, provided that the State Party submits sufficient and timely information as requested by the Committee.

10. Finally, it is noted that the property's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value remains incomplete, as it does not include requirements for integrity, protection and management. Although the property's boundaries were clarified in 2011 (Decision **35 COM 8D**), they were subsequently considered incomplete by the Committee (Decision **42 COM 7B.79**). These inconsistencies were further highlighted in the 2021 IUCN evaluation of the proposal for a minor boundary modification, which was later withdrawn by the State Party. Updated maps have since been submitted and are currently under review by the World Heritage Centre. In light of the ongoing concerns regarding the delineation of the property and its legal protection, the timely completion of the Retrospective Inventory of boundaries remains essential.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.81***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decisions **35 COM 8D, 42 COM 7B.79, 44 COM 7B.109, 45 COM 7B.26, 46 COM 7B.53** and **47 COM 7B.29**, adopted at its 35th (UNESCO, 2011), 42nd (Manama, 2018), extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021), extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023), 46th (New Delhi, 2024) and 47th (UNESCO, 2025) sessions respectively,*

3. *Notes with appreciation the implementation of measures to improve coordination and initiate work towards unified management planning and standards for the property, and requests the State Party to provide a progress report on the implementation of the Action Plan addressing the recommendations of the 2019 Reactive Monitoring mission and to submit the integrated management plan to the World Heritage Centre once available, for review by IUCN;*

4. *Notes progress in tourism planning and visitor management for individual components of the property, including the development of tourism master plans and carrying-capacity studies, and also requests the State Party to expedite the preparation of a comprehensive Tourism Development Master Plan for the property as a whole, based on consolidated data and clearly defined carrying-capacity thresholds consistent with the conservation of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);*

5. *Takes note that the Three Volcanoes Park project would reportedly be located outside the property and that the revised master plan remains under review, reiterates its requests that the master plan be submitted to the World Heritage Centre, including detailed information on its design, location and spatial relationship to the property, and urges the State Party to ensure that the master plan is subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment, taking into account the principles and approaches set out in the* Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*, and to undertake and submit project-level Environmental Impact Assessments, as appropriate, prior to the approval or implementation of any developments that may adversely affect the property;*

6. *Recalls that the boundaries of the South Kamchatka Nature Park (SKNP) were modified at the national level in 2021, resulting in the removal of legal protection from part of the*

*property, which the Committee has previously considered to constitute a clear potential danger to the property under Paragraph 180(b)(i) of the Operational Guidelines, notes the opportunity provided by the ongoing establishment of the Volcanoes of Kamchatka National Park, reportedly at the final stage of approval, to restore and strengthen the legal protection of the property, also urges the State Party to provide, by* ***1 February 2027****, clear and comprehensive evidence of the establishment of the Volcanoes of Kamchatka National Park comprising the entire territory of the South Kamchatka and Kluchevskoy Nature Parks as included in the property at the time of inscription, including the Vilyuchinskaya and Zhirovaya Bays, and considers that, in the absence of such confirmation, the property be inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger;*

7. *Urges the State Party to provide detailed information and justification regarding:*
   a) *the designation, legal status, boundaries and permitted activities within all components of the property and their buffer and protected zones,*
   b) *the functional zoning in place in all components of the property, including details of boundaries, regulations and special protection regimes applicable to the different zones, recalling the conclusion of the 2019 Reactive Monitoring mission that the zoning did not meet the requirements for protecting the OUV of the property,*
   c) *how the overall protection regime ensures the effective protection of the property in accordance with the Operational Guidelines;*

8. *Also notes that the joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission, invited again by the State Party, remains to be scheduled due to logistical constraints and will be organised as soon as feasible, and also considers that, in the interim, the adequacy of the property's legal protection, the compatibility of tourism-related developments with the conservation of its OUV, including the "Three Volcanoes Park" project, and progress in implementing the 2019 mission recommendations, can be assessed on the basis of information provided by the State Party;*

9. *Requests furthermore the State Party to develop, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and IUCN, an updated draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, including requirements for integrity, protection and management, for examination by the World Heritage Committee, and to continue cooperating with the World Heritage Centre to conclude the Retrospective Inventory of the property's boundaries;*

10. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by* ***1 February 2027****, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 49th session,* ***considering that the urgent conservation needs of this property require a broad mobilization to preserve its OUV, including the possible inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger****.*

## 82. Western Caucasus (Russian Federation)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
1999

*Criteria*
(ix)(x)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
N/A

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/900/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 0
Total amount approved: USD 0
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/900/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
N/A

*Previous monitoring missions*
April 2008, May 2010, September 2012 and September 2024: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring missions; November 2016: IUCN Advisory mission

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*

- Management systems/ management plan (lack of Management Plan)
- Legal framework (weakening of conservation controls and laws)
- Impacts of tourism / visitor / recreation (impacts of proposed tourism infrastructure development, major visitor accommodation and associated infrastructure)
- Ground transport infrastructure (road construction)
- Illegal activities (deforestation)

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/900/

*Current conservation issues*

1. On 30 January 2026, the State Party submitted a report on the state of conservation of the property, together with an explanatory note concerning the clarification of the boundaries of the property and the 2020 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the proposed Lagonaki all-season mountain resort. The report, a summary of which is available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/900/documents/, states the following:

    a) The natural monuments “Upper Pshekha and Pshekhashkha Rivers” and “Upper Tsitsa River” were reorganised in 2020 into the “Mountain Adygea Nature Park” and the “Upper Tsitsa River Nature Park”, respectively, while their boundaries and total area remained unchanged;

    b) The protection regimes for the Mountain Adygea and Upper Tsitsa River Nature Parks prohibit most forms of logging, activities that disturb habitats, geological exploration and mining, hunting, pollution, damage to trees and shrubs, and the construction of capital facilities. Within the economic zone, the construction and reconstruction of linear infrastructure and hydraulic structures may be permitted, subject to state environmental review and approval by the World Heritage Committee;

    c) By Order No. 757 of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (30 December 2025), a protective zone of the Caucasus State Nature Biosphere Reserve (CSNBR) was established, covering more than 29,000 ha across Krasnodar Krai, the Republic of Adygea and the Karachay-Cherkess Republic;

    d) Following the completion of the process of establishing protected zones for the component parts of the property, work will be continued to define a protected zone around the entire property;

    e) Plans to develop the Lagonaki all-season mountain resort continue, with engineering surveys carried out in 2025 within the Lagonaki Biosphere Polygon to assess the feasibility and viability of the project. No infrastructure has yet been constructed and no final decision regarding implementation has been taken. The results of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) required under national law will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre;

f) The submitted SEA for the Lagonaki resort (dated 2020) concluded that no significant negative impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property are expected;

g) According to information provided by the Department of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of the Republic of Adygea, the Lagonaki–Guzeripl road does not pass through the territory of the CSNBR and does not affect federal or regional specially protected natural areas;

h) The proposed Lagonaki-Sochi road and the Arkhyz–Krasnaya Polyana railway and highway are not currently being pursued, and no related documentation has been submitted for state environmental review;

i) The access road to Lunnaya Polyana is a forest road used for fire prevention and fire suppression purposes and is therefore not subject to EIA requirements under national legislation; it is not intended to provide tourism access to the Biosphere Centre.

2. On 2 June 2025, the State Party submitted to the World Heritage Centre information on the implementation of the urgent recommendations of the 2024 joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission.

3. On 11 February 2026, the World Heritage Centre transmitted a letter to the State Party requesting clarification regarding the 2020 SEA. In its reply of 27 February 2026, the State Party confirmed that the submitted SEA constitutes a preliminary appraisal of potential impacts on the property and does not replace the full EIA required under national legislation. It further indicated that the EIA will be undertaken following the completion of the design and survey work and will form part of the documentation submitted for state environmental review.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN*

4. The information provided by the State Party in its 2025 response to the 2024 mission recommendations and its 2026 state of conservation report regarding the boundaries, zoning and applicable regulations of the Mount Adygea and Upper Tsitsa River Nature Parks is noted. However, the current regulatory framework confirms that economic zones remain in place where the construction of linear facilities and hydraulic structures may be permitted, and that sanitary logging remains legally permissible. These provisions cannot be considered equivalent to those in place at the time of inscription, a conclusion that is consistent with the findings of the 2024 Reactive Monitoring mission. The legal protection and management regime should therefore be strengthened and restored to at least the level in place at the time of inscription.

5. The establishment of a protective zone for the CSNBR is noted with appreciation as an important step towards addressing the Committee's longstanding requests. The State Party should nevertheless provide detailed information on the legal and regulatory regime, as well as the management measures applicable within this zone, in particular in the northern sector. The Committee's request for the establishment of a buffer zone around the entire property remains outstanding and should be pursued.

6. It is noted with serious concern that the boundary clarification outlined in the explanatory note appears to exclude areas of the Lagonaki Plateau, where major tourism development plans remain under consideration, as well as areas of the Guzerypl and Khamyshki forest divisions and part of the Bolshoi Tkhach Nature Park component. It is recalled that, at the time of inscription, the Committee decided to include the entire Lagonaki Plateau within the property, following the State Party's agreement to include this area. It is further recalled that the 2016 IUCN evaluation did not recommend approval of the proposed significant boundary modification that would have removed some of these areas from the property, due to its likely negative impact on the property's OUV. Overall, the World Heritage Centre and IUCN consider that the proposed delineation could not be accepted as a boundary clarification, as it would constitute a substantive modification of the boundaries as inscribed. In practice, the proposed delineation would exclude areas that are recognised as part of the property and that contribute to its OUV.

7. The State Party's confirmation that plans for the development of the Lagonaki mountain resort remain under consideration, and that engineering surveys were undertaken in 2025, is noted with the utmost concern. The Committee has repeatedly emphasised that the development of large-scale tourism infrastructure within the property, including on the Lagonaki Plateau, would constitute an ascertained threat to its OUV, which could have deleterious effects on its inherent

characteristics and could lead to consideration of its inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

8. The 2020 SEA submitted with the current report does not fulfil the Committee's repeated requests for an SEA to guide sustainable socio-economic development, including tourism, within the property and its wider setting, as it constitutes a project-specific preliminary assessment that appears to be based on the assumption that the proposed development is located outside the property. The State Party's confirmation that the SEA does not replace the full EIA required under national legislation is noted. In this regard, the State Party should refrain from taking any irreversible decisions regarding tourism development within the property or its vicinity until the property boundaries have been clarified through the Retrospective Inventory process and the SEA has been completed in line with the Committee's requests. Recalling previous Committee decisions, the State Party should not proceed with the construction of the Lagonaki resort within the property and should cease all works and preparatory activities at Lagonaki Plateau. All development proposals, including those related to tourism, should be guided by the requested SEA and be subject to a project-level EIA, prepared in line with the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context* and submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN.

9. It is noted that the Lagonaki-Guzerypl road does not traverse protected areas, and that other proposed transport corridors are not currently being implemented. Nevertheless, recalling Decision **47 COM 7B.30**, the State Party should again be urged to halt the project and undertake an EIA in line with the *Guidance and Toolkit* prior to any further works.

10. Whilst noting that the access road to Lunnaya Polyana is classified as a forest fire road, for which an EIA is not required under national legislation, it is recalled that the 2024 mission was unable to verify the area and that, in the above-mentioned Decision, the Committee urged the State Party to submit an EIA for this road, clarifying how it was determined that the road would have no impact on the OUV of the property. This request should be reiterated.

11. The State Party provides limited information on invasive alien species and no information on the requested invasive species control programme.

12. In summary, as reflected above, the recommendations of the 2024 mission remain to be fully implemented. In particular, concerns persist regarding the proposed boundary clarification, which would exclude areas that are recognised as part of the property and contribute to its OUV, the continued consideration of the Lagonaki resort project, and the absence of the strategic and project-level assessments repeatedly requested by the Committee. It is therefore essential that the boundaries of the property are clarified and its legal protection restored without delay, and that no irreversible decisions are taken regarding large-scale tourism or infrastructure development, in order to prevent the property from meeting the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.82***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decisions **32 COM 7B.25, 42 COM 7B.80, 43 COM 7B.18, 44 COM 7B.110, 45 COM 7B.27, 46 COM 7B.54** and **47 COM 7B.30**, adopted at its 32nd (Quebec City, 2008), 42nd (Manama, 2018), 43rd (Baku, 2019), extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021), extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023), 46th (New Delhi, 2024), and 47th (UNESCO, 2025) sessions, respectively,*

3. *Notes the information provided by the State Party on the boundaries, zoning and regulatory frameworks of the Mount Adygea and Upper Tsitsa River Nature Parks, however, expresses concern that the applicable regimes allow, within economic zones, the construction of linear and hydraulic infrastructure, as well as sanitary logging, which*

*may not be compatible with the protection of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, and requests the State Party to restore the legal protection and management regime of the affected areas to at least the level in place at the time of inscription;*

4. *Notes with appreciation the establishment of a protective zone around the Caucasus State Nature Biosphere Reserve, and also requests the State Party to submit detailed information on the legal and regulatory regime, as well as the management measures applicable within this zone, in particular in the northern sector, in order to demonstrate that they are consistent with the protection requirements outlined in the Operational Guidelines;*

5. *Reiterates its request to the State Party to finalise the ongoing process of establishing a buffer zone around the entire property, in consultation with regional and local authorities, and to submit a high-resolution map of the proposed boundaries and management provisions to the World Heritage Centre for review prior to its formal adoption;*

6. *Expresses serious concern that the proposed boundary delineation presented as a clarification would exclude areas that are recognised as constituting part of the property and contributing to its OUV, including the Lagonaki Plateau, areas of the Guzerypl and Khamyshki forest divisions and part of the Bolshoi Tkhach Nature Park, and considers that the proposal would constitute a substantive modification of the property's boundaries and therefore cannot be accepted as a boundary clarification;*

7. *Also notes the submission of the 2020 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the proposed Lagonaki resort, and also considers that it constitutes a preliminary project-specific appraisal and therefore does not fulfil the Committee's request for an SEA to guide sustainable socio-economic development, including tourism, for the property and its wider setting;*

8. *Notes with concern that plans for the development of the Lagonaki all-season mountain resort remain under consideration, recalls that the Committee has repeatedly considered that large-scale tourism infrastructure within the property, including on the Lagonaki Plateau, would represent a threat that could have deleterious effects on the property's inherent characteristics, in conformity with Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines, hence meeting the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, and urges again the State Party to immediately cease all works at Lagonaki Pateau and to not proceed with the construction of the resort within the property;*

9. *Takes note of the numerous proposed and existing infrastructure projects within and in the vicinity of the property, urges the State Party to adopt an overarching strategic approach to sustainable socio-economic development, including tourism, for the property and its wider setting, and reiterates its request to the State Party to undertake an SEA in line with its previous Decisions and the recommendation of the 2024 Reactive Monitoring mission;*

10. *Further requests the State Party to ensure that no irreversible decisions are taken regarding tourism development within the property or its vicinity until the property boundaries have been clarified through the Retrospective Inventory process and the SEA requested by the Committee has been completed, and recalls that all development proposals that may have an impact on the property's OUV should be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), prepared in accordance with the* Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context *and submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN prior to any decision that would be difficult to reverse;*

11. *Also urges the State Party again to immediately halt the Lagonaki-Guzerypl road project and to undertake an EIA in accordance with the* Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context *before any further works are undertaken;*

12. *Notes the limited information provided on invasive alien species, also requests furthermore the State Party to provide updated information on the implementation of invasive species control programmes;*

13. *Further notes that the recommendations of the 2024 joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission remain to be fully implemented, reiterates its request to the State Party to implement them as a matter of priority, and further requests the State Party to provide a comprehensive update on their implementation in its next report;*

14. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by* ***1 February 2027****, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 49th session,* ***with a view to considering the possible inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger.***

## 83. Doñana National Park (Spain)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List*
1994

*Criteria*
(vii)(ix)(x)

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger*
N/A

*Previous Committee Decisions*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/685/documents/

*International Assistance*
Requests approved: 0
Total amount approved: USD 0
For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/685/assistance/

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*
N/A

*Previous monitoring missions*
1998: World Heritage Centre Advisory mission; 1999, 2001, 2004: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN/Ramsar missions (Doñana 2005 expert meetings on Hydrological Restoration of Wetlands); January 2011: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission and Ramsar Advisory mission; January 2015: IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission; February 2020: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN/Ramsar Reactive Monitoring mission

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*
- Oil and gas (Potential impacts from infrastructural projects in the vicinity of the property, including gas storage)
- Mining (Proposed re-opening of Aznalcóllar mine upstream of the property)
- Water infrastructure (Proposed upgrading of a dam upstream of the property)
- Water (extraction) (Unsustainable use of water with impacts on the Doñana aquifer)
- Water infrastructure (Dredging of the Guadalquivir River)

- Climate change and severe weather events / Drought (Reduced water levels and hydrological stress)
- Management and institutional factors / Governance / Legal Framework (Insufficient legal and regulatory framework and enforcement)

*Illustrative material*
See page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/685/

*Current conservation issues*

1. On 30 January 2026, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report, available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/685/documents/, which provides the following updates:

   a) Despite the exceptionally wet 2024-2025 hydrological year and partial recovery of surface water systems following a prolonged drought period, three of the five groundwater bodies remain in poor quantitative condition, indicating that current abstraction levels and practices continue to compromise the aquifer system and the groundwater-dependent ecosystems;

   b) Since 2019, 1,214 wells have been subject to closure, sealing, regularisation or related legal procedures, including 155 since the previous report. Monitoring and enforcement efforts have been further strengthened through inspection campaigns, sanctions, remote sensing and artificial intelligence-assisted systems, expansion and automation of the piezometric network, modernisation of the Water Register, and continued suspension of new concessions;

   c) Progress on the establishment of Groundwater User Communities (CUMAS) includes the approval of statutes for Marismas y La Rocina and Almonte. The 'La Rocina action programme' approved in July 2025, sets a 15% reduction in water abstractions. Action programmes for the remaining two groundwater bodies identified as at risk are still pending approval;

   d) Regarding the monitoring indicator system, the State Party indicates that the previously submitted framework includes measurable indicators, target values and monitoring frequencies aligned with the retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (rSOUV), while further refinement and operationalisation remain ongoing;

   e) The Veta la Palma former aquaculture estate, adjacent to the property acquired by the State Party in 2023, is being managed with a focus on biodiversity conservation, aiming to support the maintenance of Doñana's biodiversity, enhance its resilience and adaptive capacity to climate change, and reinforce its strategic ecological role within the Guadalquivir estuary over the medium to long term;

   *f)* A proposal to establish a buffer zone has been transmitted to the national authorities for submission to the World Heritage Centre as a minor boundary modification (MBM), in accordance with Paragraph 164 of the Operational Guidelines;

   g) Studies on ecohydrological dynamics are improving understanding of the relationship between hydrology and ecology and supporting the definition of ecological water requirements necessary to maintain the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), with initial results already available;

   h) Final approval of the Climate Change Adaptation Programme, based on climate modelling, vulnerability assessment and adaptation objectives, is expected in 2026, following delays related to an extended scientific and public consultation process;

   i) A recovery of water-dependent systems and some improvement in wintering bird populations have been observed over the past two winters; however, the State Party notes that the causes for the longer-term decline remain insufficiently understood and may also reflect broader climatic changes affecting migratory patterns;

   *j)* Regarding the Aznalcóllar mining project, documentation from the authorisation process has been submitted, including material that informed the specific assessment of potential impacts on the OUV of the property;

   k) Regarding the delimitation of the Maritime-Terrestrial Public Domain in the Doñana marshes, it is clarified that the demarcation reflects obligations under national coastal

legislation and does not in itself imply hydrological modification or increased seawater intrusion within the property;

*l)* Continued progress is reported in implementing the recommendations of the 2020 Reactive Monitoring mission across the different areas.

2. On 16 December 2025, the World Heritage Centre transmitted to the State Party third-party concerns regarding the demarcation of the Maritime–Terrestrial Public Domain in the Doñana marshes, which the State Party subsequently addressed in its state of conservation report.

*Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN*

3. The State Party report reflects continued institutional, technical and efforts to address long-standing conservation challenges, notably in groundwater governance, hydrological monitoring, biodiversity-focused management, restoration actions, inter-institutional coordination and the development of key planning tools. However, despite these advances, the overall pace of ecological recovery remains insufficient in view of the urgency and persistence of the pressures affecting the property.

4. Further progress is noted in groundwater governance, including the operationalisation of two *CUMAS*, expansion of hydrological monitoring systems, increased use of remote sensing and digital enforcement tools, modernisation of the Water Registry, and continued closure and control of illegal abstractions, in line with the Committee's request to enhance groundwater management and enforcement within and around the property. However, the confirmation that three groundwater bodies remain in poor quantitative condition indicates that the objectives of achieving sustainable abstraction and reversing aquifer decline have not yet been met. While governance and enforcement measures have been strengthened, measurable ecological recovery of the aquifer system and dependent ecosystems has yet to be sufficiently demonstrated.

5. The development of a system of indicators aligned with the rSOUV represents an important step towards strengthening the property's monitoring framework. However, further refinement remains necessary to establish clear baselines, measurable thresholds and long-term monitoring parameters for consistent assessment of the property's state of conservation over time. The Committee should therefore reiterate its request that the finalised indicators be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN and integrated into the management and monitoring framework.

6. The conservation-oriented management of Veta la Palma and progress towards the establishment of a buffer zone are positive developments that respond to the Committee's requests and have the potential to enhance ecological resilience, particularly under increasing water stress. However, the proposal for a MBM to establish a buffer zone has not yet been submitted to the World Heritage Centre, and its submission should be prioritised.

7. While progress is noted in ecohydrological dynamics and the expected finalisation of the Climate Change Adaptation Programme, critical gaps remain. The ecohydrological model, requested by the Committee in line with the 2020 Reactive Monitoring mission, remains incomplete, continuing to limit the ability to clarify the relationship between the hydrology and ecology and to define water requirements necessary to maintain the property's OUV. This constrains the development of adaptive management and climate resilience measures. Furthermore, the Programme has yet to provide clearly defined adaptation objectives, measurable targets and water use reduction commitments required for effective implementation.

8. The reported increase in wintering bird numbers is encouraging. However, in light of the documented long-term declining trend, already highlighted by the Committee, and the need to better understand the underlying drivers, including hydrological and habitat changes, continued monitoring and targeted research remain necessary to inform effective conservation measures and support the recovery and long-term viability of these populations.

9. Regarding the Aznalcóllar mining project, while documentation from the authorisation process has been submitted, the full Environmental Impact Assessment, including a specific assessment of potential impacts on the property's OUV, in line with the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*, as requested by the Committee, has not been provided. This represents a lack of follow-up to the Committee's request and remains a matter of concern, particularly in relation to potential impacts on water quality and associated risks to the

OUV. The required documentation should be submitted for review prior to making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse.

10. Regarding the Maritime-Terrestrial Public Domain in the Doñana marshes, it is noted that legal proceedings remain ongoing. Considering potential negative impacts of hydrological changes on the property, any future management, hydrological or planning measures associated with this demarcation should be fully compatible with the protection of the property's OUV.

11. The cumulative interaction between groundwater overexploitation, climate change, habitat degradation, agricultural intensification, amongst other pressures, continues to pose a significant risk to the long-term integrity and resilience of the property. Despite progress, the continued poor quantitative condition of three of the five groundwater bodies, combined with delays in the development and implementation of key planning and management tools, remains a matter of concern. The full and effective implementation of the recommendations of the 2020 Reactive Monitoring mission therefore remains essential to address the Committee's concerns and ensure the protection of the property's OUV.

12. Should the decline of the Doñana aquifer not be reversed through the rapid and effective implementation of conservation actions, continued degradation could result in significant adverse impacts on the property's OUV. In accordance with Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines, such impacts could create the conditions for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

## ***Draft Decision: 48 COM 7B.83***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/26/48.COM/7B.Add.3,*

2. *Recalling Decisions* ***37 COM 7B.27, 38 COM 7B.79, 39 COM 7B.26, 41 COM 7B.9, 43 COM 7B.20, 44 COM 7B.191, 45 COM 7B.97*** *and* ***47 COM 7B.31****, adopted at its 37th (Phnom Penh, 2013), 38th (Doha, 2014), 39th (Bonn, 2015), 41st (Krakow, 2017), 43rd (Baku, 2019), extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021), extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023) and 47th (UNESCO, 2025) sessions respectively,*

3. *Acknowledges the continued efforts of the State Party to address the long-standing conservation challenges affecting the property, particularly in relation to strengthening groundwater governance, hydrological monitoring, restoration measures and inter-institutional coordination, including through the control of illegal abstractions, the operationalisation of Groundwater User Communities (*CUMAS*), and the further development of monitoring and planning tools;*

4. *Notes again with utmost concern that three of the five groundwater bodies remain in poor quantitative condition due to ongoing over-exploitation, despite the continued efforts by the State Party, and strongly reiterates its request to the State Party to fully implement, as a matter of urgency, all recommendations of the 2020 Reactive Monitoring mission, in particular those related to the assessment of groundwater recharge rates and the establishment of enforceable and sustainable extraction thresholds;*

5. *Welcomes the progress achieved in establishing and operationalising* CUMAS*, including the approval of the statues for the Marismas y La Rocina and Almonte groundwater communities, as well as the approval of the action programme for the La Rocina groundwater body, and again strongly encourages the State Party to continue and strengthen its efforts to enhance groundwater governance, in particular by finalising and implementing action programmes for all remaining groundwater bodies declared at risk, supported by a clear legal framework and fully integrated into the overall hydrological*

*management system of the property, with a view to demonstrating measurable progress in reducing groundwater abstraction;*

6. *Encourages the State Party to prioritise the finalisation and operationalisation of the system of indicators aligned with the retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, ensuring that clear baselines, thresholds and long-term monitoring parameters are established, and to submit the refined indicators to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN;*

7. *Notes positively the conservation-oriented management of Veta la Palma, as well as the progress towards the establishment of a buffer zone for the property, and requests the State Party to prioritise the formal submission of the proposed minor boundary modification to the World Heritage Centre;*

8. *Notes with concern that the ecohydrological model requested by the Committee has not yet been finalised, recalls again the need to clarify the relationship between hydrology and ecology to define the property's water requirements for maintaining its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), and therefore strongly urges again the State Party to expedite its completion and operationalisation, in line with the recommendations of the 2020 Reactive monitoring mission, in order to inform adaptive management and climate resilience measures;*

9. *Regrets the continued delay in finalising the Climate Change Adaptation Programme, and reiterates its request to the State Party to finalise and implement this strategic framework without delay, including through concrete adaptation and mitigation measures, clearly defined objectives and water use reduction targets necessary to maintain the property's OUV;*

10. *Takes note of the reported increase in wintering bird numbers over the last two years, however, also requests the State Party to further assess the underlying factors contributing to the longer-term declining trend, including the role of hydrological and habitat changes within and around the property, and to develop and implement targeted management measures to support the recovery and long-term viability of these populations;*

11. *Also regrets that its request for a specific assessment of the potential impacts of the Aznalcóllar mining project on the property's OUV, in line with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, has not yet been addressed, and further requests the State Party to submit the complete Environmental Impact Assessment, together with a specific assessment of the project's potential impacts on the property's OUV, including the potential impacts of mine discharges on water quality, to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN prior to making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse;*

12. *Also takes note of the information provided regarding the delimitation of the Maritime-Terrestrial Public Domain in the Doñana marshes, including the clarification that the demarcation is intended to formally recognise the existing extent of the Maritime-Terrestrial Public Domain rather than establish a new legal regime; however, notes that concerns remain regarding the potential long-term implications for the hydrological and ecological management of the property, its OUV and related planning instruments, and requests furthermore the State Party to provide further clarification and to ensure that any future interpretation or implementation of the delimitation remains fully compatible with the protection of the property's OUV;*

13. *Reiterates its view that, if the decline of the Doñana aquifer (Almonte-Marismas detritic aquifer) is not reversed through rapid and effective implementation of conservation actions, including the full implementation of the recommendations of the 2020 Reactive Monitoring mission, continued degradation could result in significant adverse impacts on the OUV of the property and have deleterious effects on its inherent characteristics, in conformity with paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines, which may create the conditions for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger;*

14. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2027**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 49th session.*