THE SUBMISSION OF
STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT
BY THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

(in compliance with Paragraph 169 of the Operational Guidelines)

Name of the property:
Plitvice Lakes National Park (Republic of Croatia)

Date of inscription on the World Heritage List:
1979; (extension 2000)

Inscription Criteria:
(vii)(viii)(ix)

Identification number:
98bis

1. Executive Summary of the report

Plitvice Lakes National Park is the oldest Croatian national park and the only area in the Republic of Croatia inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It is well known for its magnificent travertine dams that form clear lakes in constant biodynamic process of tufa building and growth. As a result of that process a string of 16 step-like arranged larger lakes and several smaller ones that are the most picturesque part of this park was created. The area of the National Park was expanded in 1998 on the basis of hydrogeological analyses which indicated that the Plitvice Lakes catchment area was larger than the existing scope. This is a karst aquifer which today encompasses 80% of the surface area of the National Park.

No less than 1267 various plant species are registered in the Park out of which as many as 50 orchid species, 321 butterfly species, 157 bird species, 20 bat species. A special place in the rich fauna is occupied by the largest European carnivores: brown bear, wolf and lynx. Due to its uniqueness, natural beauty and value as a national park, Plitvice Lakes were in 1979 inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Plitvice Lakes are protected according to three criteria of outstanding universal value:
- VII contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance
- VIII are outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features
- IX are outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals

For effective conservation of the lake system and the dynamic growth of tufa barriers as an outstanding universal value it is necessary to ensure an efficient management of the entire Plitvice Lakes catchment area, which is among other ensured through the implementation of the Management
Plan of the Plitvice Lakes National Park as well as the spatial planning documents.

In recent times the growing challenge for the National Park is the excessive visiting in the lake system which was not resolved by the spatial plan but is planned to be regulated through the adoption and effective implementation of the visitor management plan. Concurrently with the preparation of the visitor management plan also a new general management plan will be developed. The old plan was adopted for a period of ten years and will cease to be valid in 2017 when the completion of the new management plan is expected.

Besides the anthropogenic impact also significant is the impact caused by global climate change. Through monitoring of physical and chemical parameters changes in temperature were observed and consequently also in the ecosystem. In the course of the following four years the completion of a project is expected the result of which will be a mathematical hydrodynamic model that will enable continuous monitoring of the Plitvice Lakes underground and terrestrial water system as well as the physical and chemical parameters with the possibility to predict the potential impacts. The climate model as a precondition for the development of a hydrodynamic model will enable prediction of the changes in the water system due to climate changes which will in the future make possible adjustments in the management of the protected area.

2. **Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee**

The obligation to adopt spatial plans of areas with special features for national parks and nature parks is prescribed by a special regulation in the field of physical planning. The indicated regulation also determines the manner of development and adoption of spatial plans of national parks and nature parks, their content as well as the competent development authority and the competence for their adoption.

The competent development authority for a spatial plan of a national parks and spatial plan of a nature parks is the central state administration body competent for physical planning – the Ministry of Construction and Physical Planning, and it is adopted by the Croatian parliament.

The spatial plan is developed according to the principles of physical planning determined by the Act regulating physical planning which is in force, on the basis of professional rules, existing natural and realised values, and in relation to spatial functional solutions. The fundamental principle of physical planning is an integrated approach to spatial planning. Within the context of the above indicated it is important to stress that expert background documents in certain sectors take into account complete sectoral data and requirements without consideration of the needs of other beneficiaries. In this regard they form a part of the background documents for the development of a plan.

The procedure of developing a spatial plan, and in particular a spatial plan of a national parks and nature parks, is a procedure which due to the complex nature of space can extend over several years.

For the purpose of developing spatial plans of areas with special features, in order to better consider and plan space within the scope of the plan, expert background documents are also prepared (cultural heritage, settlements, transport, etc.). The spatial arrangement, manner of use, planning and protection of space in a national park or nature park are regulated by a spatial plan on the basis of the expert background document prepared by the Croatian Agency for Environment and Nature (former State Institute for Nature Protection).

The preparation of expert background documents for the Spatial plan of the Plitvice Lakes National Park was initiated in 2000, while the actual procedure of the development of the plan started in 2005.

On 18 July 2005 the National Park signed a contract on co-financing of the development of the Spatial plan. At a later date the National Park also signed two annexes on additional co-financing of the development of the Spatial plan. On 19 June 2006 the Ministry of Culture and the Lika-Senj County signed a contract on the preparation of a conservation study that should cover all settlements in the territory of the National Park, however the study was never completed.

In accordance with the Nature Protection Act and the Physical Planning Act, the State Institute for Nature Protection prepared in 2008 the expert background document for the National Park for the purpose of developing the Spatial plan. The expert background document contains a detailed description of the features and the values of the area as well as the assessment of the status of that area.