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# **World Heritage Patrimoine mondial**

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**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,  
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

**ORGANISATION DES NATIONS UNIES  
POUR L'EDUCATION, LA SCIENCE ET LA CULTURE**

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

**CONVENTION CONCERNANT LA PROTECTION DU PATRIMOINE  
MONDIAL, CULTUREL ET NATUREL**

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**Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda: State of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List and/or on the List of World Heritage in Danger**

**Point 7 de l'Ordre du jour provisoire: Etat de conservation de biens inscrits sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial et/ou sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial en péril**

**MISSION REPORT / RAPPORT DE MISSION**

**Simien National Park (Ethiopia) (N 9)  
Parc national du Simien (Éthiopie) (N 9)  
23 – 30 April 2017**

**International Union for Conservation of Nature - IUCN**

# **Reactive Monitoring Mission to Simien National Park, Ethiopia**

**23 - 30 April 2017**



**Mission Report, May 2017**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. BACKGROUND TO THE MISSION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. LEGAL AND MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3. IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF ISSUES .....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Threats and Issues and the List of World Heritage in Danger .....	9
3.2 Further Conservation and Management Issues.....	12
3.2.1 Management and Governance .....	12
3.2.2 Natural Resource Use, Settlements and Resettlements .....	14
3.2.3 Road and Energy Infrastructure.....	16
3.2.4 Tourism Management.....	18
3.2.5 Wildlife Management .....	19
3.2.6 Climate Change.....	23
3.2.7 The Property and the wider Afro-alpine Ecosystem .....	23
<b>4. ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF CONSERVATION.....</b>	<b>25</b>
4.1 State of Conservation and the List of World Heritage in Danger .....	25
4.2 Further Technical Observations .....	28
<b>5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>6. REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>7. USEFUL LINKS .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>8. ANNEXES.....</b>	<b>37</b>
Annex 1: World Heritage Committee Decision 40 COM 7A.43 (Istanbul, 2016) .....	37
Annex 2: Terms of Reference of the IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission.....	38
Annex 3: Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value of SMNP .....	40
Annex 4: Mission Agenda as conducted .....	42
Annex 5: Additional colleagues consulted.....	43
Annex 6: Selected Maps .....	44
Map 1: Overview Map of Simien National Park as inscribed in 1978 .....	44
Map 2: Simien National Park as inscribed in 1978 within the broader Simien Mountains.....	44
Map 3: Revised boundaries of Simien Mountains National Park.....	45
Map 4: Boundaries of the National Park as gazetted in 2015 .....	45
Map 5: Major roads in and near the Property .....	46
Map 6: Overview Map of the Eastern Afromontane Hotspot .....	46
Annex 7: Photographic Documentation.....	47

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>ADA</b>	Austrian Development Agency
<b>ANRS</b>	Amhara National Regional State
<b>ARCCH</b>	Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage
<b>AWF</b>	African Wildlife Foundation
<b>AZE</b>	Alliance for Zero Extinction
<b>CBD</b>	Convention on Biological Diversity
<b>CITES</b>	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
<b>CMS</b>	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species
<b>CRC</b>	Community Resettlement Committee
<b>DSOCR</b>	Desired State of Conservation for the Removal of a Property from the List of World Heritage in Danger
<b>EIA</b>	Environmental Impact Assessment
<b>EWCA</b>	Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority
<b>EWCO</b>	Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Organisation
<b>EWCP</b>	Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Project
<b>FZS</b>	Frankfurt Zoological Society
<b>GMP</b>	General Management Plan
<b>GPRS</b>	Grazing Pressure Reduction Strategy
<b>ha</b>	Hectare
<b>IAS</b>	Invasive Alien Species
<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for Conservation of Nature
<b>KfW</b>	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
<b>m.a.s.l.</b>	Meters above sea level
<b>MOCT</b>	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organisation
<b>OG</b>	Operational Guidelines
<b>OUV</b>	Outstanding Universal Value
<b>PaDPA</b>	Amhara Parks Development and Protection Authority
<b>PoWPA</b>	Programme of Work on Protected Areas
<b>RAP</b>	Resettlement Action Plan
<b>RPF</b>	Resettlement Policy Framework
<b>SEP</b>	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
<b>SIA</b>	Social Impact Assessment
<b>SMNP</b>	Simien Mountains National Park
<b>SOC</b>	State of Conservation
<b>SSC</b>	Species Survival Commission (IUCN)
<b>UNCCD</b>	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Situated in the Northern Ethiopian Highlands, the Simien Mountains are famous for their extraordinary landscape beauty and three flagship species: the locally endemic Walia Ibex (*Capra walie*), the Ethiopian Wolf (*Canis simensis*), and Gelada (*Theropithecus gelada*), a primate of a genus endemic to Ethiopia. The diverse vegetation includes remnants of different forest types and afro-alpine vegetation renowned for a high degree of endemism. Besides extraordinary scenic and biodiversity values, water provision and regulation are critical ecosystem services of the Simien Mountains.

Simien Mountains National Park (SMNP) was legally gazetted in 1969 and became a World Heritage property in 1978. While the World Heritage property formally continues to be restricted to the 13,600 ha originally inscribed, the surface area of SMNP has since been more than tripled. The human history of the mountains predates the park establishment by millennia. Over time, a growing, resource-dependant population has visibly exceeded the capacity of the mountain ecosystems in many places, including in parts of the property and the larger SMNP. Besides the impacts of a long civil war, SMNP is affected by, and vulnerable to, agricultural encroachment, over-grazing, road construction, insufficiently planned and controlled tourism development and the anticipated consequences of climate change.

In 1996, more than two decades ago, the property was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger due to declining wildlife and loss of biodiversity more broadly, encroachment and road construction. Benchmarks, corrective measures and indicators for a Desired State of Conservation for the Removal of a Property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) have since been developed to guide management responses. The focus has always been the size and boundary configuration of the property, as well as the complex interface between conservation and local livelihood needs. The Reactive Monitoring mission documented in this report assessed progress achieved towards the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger. Technical recommendations are derived and a pragmatic proposal for a new way forward is offered.

It is unquestionable that all governmental levels of the State Party have demonstrated enormous commitment and have made major and effective investments under challenging circumstances. More than tripling the original surface area of the national park is undoubtedly the single most important milestone to enhance SMNP's conservation (and restoration) prospects. The recent gazetting of SMNP's new boundaries has formally concluded this process at the national level, and all involved deserve major credit for this achievement. The mission concludes that the corrective measures that relate to the realignment of the boundaries of the national park have been fully implemented and the corresponding DSOCR indicators met.

The mission also notes the following progress against the other corrective measures and DSOCR indicators:

- Although there is no consensus on the exact population numbers of Walia Ibex and Ethiopian Wolf, there is widespread agreement that they are increasing or at least stable. While both species remain highly vulnerable, the expanded SMNP boundaries may also considerably enhance their conservation prospects;
- The recent voluntary relocation of Gich communities has reduced the number of households resident in the property, and is likely to have reduced the agricultural areas in a particularly important central area of the property;

Important further progress could be made against the corrective measures and indicators guiding the DSOCR as follows:

- The number of residents and area of cultivated land within the property could be reduced further, while ensuring full participation of affected communities and compliance with all national laws and international policy and guidance;
- Building on the existing Grazing Pressure Reduction Strategy, the understanding of the situation of livestock grazing within the property and therefore its management options could be much improved through the undertaking of a situation analysis and revising the strategy accordingly.

The mission considers that reducing use pressure, while enabling local communities to reduce their direct dependence on the natural resources of the park is a massive and permanent management task for the foreseeable future. The existing DSOCR indicator on alternative livelihood therefore does not permit assessment. The combination of debatable quantitative indicators and limited data in terms of baselines, trends and current status also does not permit a clear-cut technical assessment of the efforts in terms of the reduction of grazing pressure, the only outstanding DSOCR indicator. The mission considers that the main bottleneck is the continuing lack of clarity on the exact framework for natural resource use within the property and difficulties to fund and implement existing policies and plans. In principle, applicable legislation categorically bans consumptive natural resource use in SMNP, including livestock grazing, but it is clear that this is far from the current reality. While there can be no doubt that severe overgrazing is massively affecting the conservation values of the property and SMNP and needs to be substantially reduced, the debatable foundation of static quantitative DSOCR or other indicators is questionable as a decisive reference in this regard.

The 2015 Grazing Pressure Reduction Strategy (GPRS) contains a wealth of information and food for thought and should be used to inform further discussions. Selective implementation has started and is showing promising results in terms of recovery of vegetation and observable return of wildlife. The State Party and implementing partners are fully aware that progress in this regard must be coupled with support to alternative livelihoods. The mission however, also doubts whether the proposal in the GPRS to exclude 92 per cent of SMNP from any form of grazing is realistic or even desirable under the given circumstances. It is implausible that impoverished local communities living all around or even in the park agreed to the proposed ban on grazing across large areas of currently used land as the GPRS appears to suggest. It is far from clear what the direct and indirect implications of such an extreme measure would be and the GPRS does not address such questions. The enforcement of the GPRS in its proposed form could well be counterproductive by creating major hostility to the national park. There is also a risk that a de facto open-access regime could be created as is commonly observed when natural resource use is turned illegal but not accompanied by effective law enforcement. In the view of the mission overgrazing rather than grazing is the main problem, which means that the necessary and major reduction of grazing throughout SMNP requires more nuanced debate. To be clear, there is an urgent need to address and regulate overgrazing and other natural resource extraction. The main elements proposed in the GPRS, zonation and user agreements, are adequate and promising. However, they should be based on a realistic assessment of the scenarios resulting from various possible options and further be negotiated with affected communities.

The mission therefore recommends that the DSOCR indicator on grazing be updated to assess the enabling framework rather than a quantitative figure as follows:

*A clear, realistic and funded plan has been adopted to manage and substantially reduce overgrazing in the property to levels that do not impact on its Outstanding Universal Value and implementation of the plan has been initiated.*

The removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger is within tangible reach, provided concerted continuation of the on-going management response. The mission does not believe that this complex task can or should be assessed against a static and quantitative indicator of

a status. Rather the mission proposes that the State Party be given a chance to demonstrate its ability to consolidate a policy and management framework along with a realistic and fundable implementation plan. The way to such a point in time could take advantage of two parallel pending processes as outlined hereafter:

- After years of ambiguity the mission wishes to recall that the World Heritage Committee has explicitly requested the State Party to submit a proposal for a Significant Boundary Modification (**Decisions 40 COM 7A.43 and 35 COM 7A.9**) to harmonize the current discrepancy between the boundaries of SMNP and the World Heritage property;
- As per paragraph 165 of the Operational Guidelines, it is critical to understand that any Significant Boundary Modification amounts to a new nomination;
- The Significant Boundary Modification does not formally constitute a condition for the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger but rather a separate and parallel request by the World Heritage Committee;
- The mission is confident that the two parallel requirements under the Convention can and should be addressed jointly.

The pending new nomination of SMNP represents an attractive opportunity and well-structured framework to address all World Heritage considerations in SMNP, in particular to remove discrepancy in terms of size and configuration. As with any World Heritage nominations, the new nomination of SMNP will have to demonstrate compliance with World Heritage requirements. Doing so is not identical but very similar to what needs to be demonstrated to justify removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger. Thereby progress towards a successful nomination can support progress towards the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger according to a clearly defined pathway with defined timelines. As such, the nomination process could serve as a coherent framework to structure and coordinate the implementation of actions towards meeting the DSOCR. Concretely, given that the effort can build upon a draft nomination already produced by the State Party and a wealth of readily available information from existing plans, strategies and studies the mission considers submission by 1 February 2018 feasible. IUCN, the World Heritage Centre and EWCA partners can be expected to support and are strongly encouraged to do so. A nomination by 1 February 2018 would trigger an independent IUCN evaluation in the second half of 2018. In mid 2019 the World Heritage Committee would take a decision on the nomination. Thereby, the time horizon for immediate World Heritage follow-up would be around two years. Realistically, there are two possible outcomes and scenarios:

- An inscription decision in 2019 would constitute a best-case scenario. As such a decision would confirm compliance with World Heritage expectations, it would logically put the State Party in an excellent position to demonstrate compliance with the corrective measures and DSOCR for the removal from the World Heritage List in Danger;
- A decision for referral or deferral would have to be accompanied by concrete and updated guidance on the discrepancy between World Heritage expectations and the status quo. This would not weaken the State Party's position but contribute to inform the on-going management response to meet World Heritage expectations.

In the view of the mission there is no realistic risk of a new nomination leading to a recommendation for non-inscription. Such an outcome would be incompatible with the on-going process to remove the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger and be contradictory to the Committee's requests since Decision **35 COM 7A.9** to submit a proposal for boundary modification.

**Recommendation 1**

Prioritize the preparation of a Significant Boundary Modification on the understanding that it amounts to a new nomination, and use the process as a coherent framework to structure and coordinate the implementation of actions towards meeting the Desired State of Conservation for the Removal of the Property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR), and other Committee requests with immediate effect.

As its second overarching recommendation, the mission recommends that the elaboration of the next General Management Plan (GMP) should start as soon as possible as the main platform to discuss and structure future management, fully considering the World Heritage status and its implications. The new GMP can build upon the existing GMP and a wealth of information, strategies, plans and other guidance elaborated since, in particular as regards livestock grazing and tourism. The elaboration of the new GMP can and should be linked to the new nomination. Distilled to their essence, both the new nomination and the new GMP will have to lay out much of the same descriptive information, objectives for the management and conservation and outline the activities required to meet these objectives. Both activities can and should have their landing points in 2019.

**Recommendation 2**

Initiate the evaluation of the current 2009-2019 General Management Plan (GMP) to inform the next GMP, and extend the geographical scope to include the expanded Simien Mountains National Park (SMNP) boundaries as soon as possible to discuss and structure future management, taking advantage of the exercise to inform the new nomination of SMNP and vice-versa.

The above recommendations to focus on two complementary and mutually reinforcing exercises can and should consistently incorporate all thematic areas. The following list provides an overview of all individual recommendations to the State Party offered in chapter 3. All recommendations are explained in detail in the corresponding sub-chapters.

**Recommendation 3**

Consolidate the participation of local communities in the management and eventually the governance (decision-making) of the property and SMNP.

**Recommendation 4**

Ensure clear and agreed communication, coordination and cooperation mechanisms between the management authority of SMNP and international institutions operating at SMNP to maximize the coherence and effectiveness of external support and advice.

**Recommendation 5**

Build on the existing Grazing Pressure Reduction Strategy to consolidate and refine realistic and effective guidance on livestock grazing in the property and the larger SMNP, including by investing in a better understanding of the consequences of reducing grazing for local communities, entering into user agreements and establishing conflict management mechanisms.

**Recommendation 6**

Establish negotiated user agreements with local communities defining both rights and responsibilities associated with natural resource use.

**Recommendation 7**

Ensure the continued monitoring and compliance of the Gich and Arkwazi community resettlements with all national laws and international policy and guidance.

**Recommendation 8**

Finalize the construction of the alternative road, which will mostly be located outside of the property and SMNP, to reduce the impacts of the main road within the property and SMNP.

**Recommendation 9**

Systematically incorporate management of all road infrastructures into the management of SMNP starting with the new General Management Plan (GMP), in particular as regards impact monitoring and mitigation.

**Recommendation 10**

Relocate the power transmission line from its current alignment next to the main road running through the property and SMNP, to be in line with the new alternative road in conformity to the State Party's commitment, upon completion of the alternative road currently under construction.

**Recommendation 11**

Strengthen the implementation of tourism management, building upon the comprehensive provisions of the existing GMP and other readily available guidance.

**Recommendation 12**

Re-invest in the maintenance of existing tourism infrastructure while restricting new infrastructure to outside of the property and SMNP, fully considering all environmental and social impacts.

**Recommendation 13**

Incorporate standardized and replicable monitoring of Walia Ibex, Ethiopian Wolf and Gelada as the three flagship species in routine management, including in relation to disturbance from tourism.

**Recommendation 14**

Incorporate simple and replicable climate change monitoring into routine monitoring protocols.

## 1. BACKGROUND TO THE MISSION

Situated in the Northern Ethiopian Highlands, the Simien Mountains encompass Ethiopia's highest peak, Ras Dashen, at 4,540 m.a.s.l. according to recently updated mapping. The mountain range is characterized by a dramatic escarpment separating some of Ethiopia's highest lands from lower highland areas descending slightly below 2,000 m.a.s.l. Part of the North Gondar Zone of Ethiopia's Amhara National Regional State (ANRS), the mountains are famous both for their breathtaking landscape beauty and several charismatic mammal species. The latter include the locally endemic and endangered Walia Ibex (*Capra walie*), the likewise endangered Ethiopian Wolf (*Canis simensis*), the world's rarest canid, and Gelada (*Theropithecus gelada*), a primate species and genus endemic to Ethiopia. The faunal wealth also includes, for example, golden jackal, leopard, spotted hyena, Serval cat, two other primate species and a diverse avifauna. Various rodent species play crucial ecological roles, in particular in the afro-alpine belt. The distinct vegetation zones along the considerable altitudinal gradient comprises savannah in the lowest elevations, remnants of Tree Heath (Giant Erica, *Erica arborea*) and other montane forest types, as well as (sub)afro-alpine vegetation with a high degree of endemism. The Simien Mountains are also of critical importance in terms of water provision and regulation far beyond their immediate surroundings, including across international borders. The tourism potential of the region is undisputed, yet much remains to be done to maximize the benefits and minimize the impacts and risks.

Simien Mountains National Park (SMNP) was established in 1966 and first gazetted in 1969, primarily to save the locally endemic Walia Ibex from imminent extinction from overhunting. In 1978, the park was inscribed on the World Heritage List as "Simien National Park" and as legally defined in 1969; SMNP was among the first four natural World Heritage sites worldwide, a source of pride in Ethiopia to this day. Inscribed under what are today criteria (vii) and (x), the World Heritage property formally continues to be restricted to the 13,600 ha originally inscribed despite significant stepwise expansions eventually more than tripling the national park's surface area to some 41,200 ha today. This report uses the abbreviation SMNP whenever referring to the national park as legally designated today unless otherwise noted. When referring to the much smaller area inscribed in the World Heritage List in 1978, this report refers to "the property".

The Simien Mountains have an ancient human history predating the park establishment by more than two millennia. They are located along historic trade and pilgrimage routes and contain important cultural, spiritual and religious sites, including monasteries. Human use has been intense at all times throughout SMNP's history of more than half a century. Today the park can be described as a relic within a highly threatened mountain ecosystem otherwise largely transformed by settlements, agriculture and livestock grazing throughout Ethiopia. The main pressures, triggering the establishment of SMNP in the first place, stem from a growing, economically poor and directly resource-dependent population living within or in the immediate vicinity of the park. The cultivation of barley, wheat, beans and other crops and livestock husbandry are fundamental to local livelihoods, as is the harvesting of natural resources for food, fodder, medicine, construction material and energy etc. The intensity of land and resource use often exceeds the productivity of the land, most visibly in the form of erosion and forest loss and degradation. In addition, many years of armed conflict took a heavy toll on both the communities and natural resources. Concerns about road construction, insufficiently planned and controlled tourism development and the anticipated consequences of climate change add further complexity to the conservation equation.

Following management breakdown during the civil war, the property was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 1996 in an effort to draw attention to the urgent need for a major and concerted management response. For more than two decades the property has remained on the List of World Heritage in Danger. Earlier mission reports and other formal World Heritage documentation, including governmental reporting, indicate a consensus on the

main challenges, all of which are reflected in multiple decisions of the World Heritage Committee. An evolving set of “benchmarks” - or “corrective measures” in the current language of the *Operational Guidelines* – was developed to guide management responses in order to enable the eventual removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger, through (i) the expansion of the national park, along with adequate boundary demarcation; (ii) formal gazettement of the enlarged surface area; (iii) reduced livestock numbers and (iv) promotion of alternative livelihood options. A Desired State of Conservation for the Removal of the Property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR), along with specific indicators, further refines these measures, as discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

It is important to emphasize that the Committee’s request to formalize the recognition of SMNP’s modified boundaries and substantially enlarged surface area triggers a “Significant Boundary Modification” under the World Heritage Convention. This procedure inevitably and explicitly implies a new nomination as per paragraph 165 of the *Operational Guidelines*, as has been requested in two applicable Committee decisions (**40 COM 7A.43**, **35 COM 7A.9**).

The Terms of Reference (ToR, see Annex 2) requested the Reactive Monitoring mission to assess progress in the implementation of the corrective measures and towards meeting the DSOCR according to Committee Decision **40 COM 7A.43** (see Annex 1). More specifically, the ToR required the mission to assess progress in terms of (i) the gazettement of the new park boundary; (ii) reducing the impacts of the livestock grazing and (iii) provision of alternative livelihoods, and other efforts to reconcile conservation and livelihood needs within the property. In line with paragraph 173 of the *Operational Guidelines*, the mission was further tasked and mandated to review “any other relevant issues that may negatively impact the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, including its conditions of integrity and protection and management”. The mission was conducted by Mr. Tilman Jaeger representing IUCN.

## 2. LEGAL AND MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Ethiopia ratified the World Heritage Convention in 1977 and adheres to major multilateral environmental agreements, including but not limited to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The perhaps most tangible overarching guidance on protected areas can be derived from Ethiopia’s National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan under the CBD (Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute, 2015) and the Action Plan for the implementation of the CBD’s Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA, Government of Ethiopia, 2012).

All land within SMNP is public and administered by the government. The first period of active park management came under the mandate of the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Organization (EWCO) but was otherwise externally driven. Over the first years, expatriate wardens were at the helm of SMNP with the support of WWF International and the U.S. Peace Corps.

Subsequently, SMNP was abandoned and its infrastructure destroyed during the long civil war; management resuming only after 1991. Management authority for SMNP remained with EWCO until the authority was transferred to the Amhara National Regional State in 1997 as part of broader decentralization efforts. The regional government established the semiautonomous Amhara Parks Development and Protection Authority (PaDPA) to carry out this responsibility. More recently, in 2008, the management authority for SMNP was moved back to the federal government. Regardless of differing views on federal versus regional leadership encountered by the mission, it was unanimously acknowledged that the Amhara

National Regional State (ANRS) showed significant and effective commitment during its time as the primary land manager and continues to do so in its current role. Mutual respect was consistently expressed between the various governmental levels and it seems very clear to all involved that effective management of SMNP relies on coordinated efforts of all involved governmental levels.

The Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA) was established in 2008 (Proclamation No. 575/2008) to serve as the institution in charge of federal protected areas. The institutional set-up today is somewhat unusual in that EWCA belongs to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MOCT). From a technical perspective, there are obvious and critical linkages with several other governmental institutions in charge of natural resource management, water, agriculture and environmental protection suggesting a need for functional coordinating mechanisms. At the time of writing, EWCA's website offers the full text of two central legal documents besides the above proclamation. These are the Proclamation to provide for the Development Conservation and Utilization of Wildlife (Proclamation No. 541/2007) and the Council of Ministers Regulations on Wildlife Development, Conservation and Utilization (Regulations No. 163/2008). The latter bans most natural resource use in national parks while offering an option for park management and local communities to enter into specific agreements permitting defined and controlled use.

The General Management Plan (GMP) notes that formal governmental management – initially with a focus on regulating hunting – dates back to 1944 under the then Ministry of Agriculture. Into the 1960s, the area was a de facto controlled hunting area and a royal hunting ground. In response to wildlife declines, the national park was established in 1966 and gazetted three years later (Simien National Park Order No. 59/1969). More recently, the park boundaries were both aligned and significantly expanded (Simien Mountains National Park Designation Council of Ministers Regulation No. 337/2014). The regulation came into force with the publication in the Federal Negarit Gazette in February 2015.

Against the widely used IUCN Protected Area Matrix, SMNP can be classified as Management Category II (national park) and Governance Type A (governance by government). It is important to understand though that most of the land was inhabited and used by local communities at the time of park establishment, and the same holds true for much of the current surface area of SMNP. The World Heritage nomination refers to 80% of directly used land in this context. In light of the rugged mountainous terrain, which includes extremely steep slopes and large inaccessible cliffs, this indicates that in essence all usable areas were under actual use at the time. The GMP documents the forced relocation of seven villages from the northern escarpment in the early years of SMNP, acknowledging predictable tensions and opposition to the national park as a result. Two recent village relocations have reduced the number of residents within SMNP, but there is a growing number of people all around it. It is clear that a balance between formal conservation objectives and the needs and aspirations of the local communities has been the decisive management challenge at all times and will be for the foreseeable future.

According to the current GMP, a first management plan dated 1986 could never be implemented due to armed conflict in and around SMNP. Further attempts in 2000 and 2006 were apparently never finalized or endorsed. The current GMP therefore appears to be the first approved management plan for SMNP ever. It covers the period from 2009 to 2019, complemented by more detailed 3-year action planning. The GMP is structured according to five thematic programmes: (i) Ecological Management; (ii) Settlement Management; (iii) Park Operations; (iv) Tourism Management; and (v) Outreach. The purpose of SMNP is defined in remarkably holistic fashion as follows:

To conserve the exceptional resource values of the Simien Mountains, including its endangered and endemic fauna and flora, spectacular landscape and hydrological system, for current and future generations of the people of Simien, Ethiopia and the world, thereby contributing to sustainable economic and tourism development.

### 3. IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF ISSUES

Both the formal World Heritage documentation and the literature on SMNP note a wide range of conservation and management challenges. Some, but not all, can be linked to the justification for the inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger. During the mission, it became clear that there have been several communication barriers over SMNP's more than two decades on the List of World Heritage in Danger. Unfortunately, these barriers appear to have compromised the effectiveness of exchange; they are therefore listed hereafter in an attempt to facilitate enhanced communication in the future:

- The debate has not always clearly distinguished requirements for the removal from the World Heritage List in Danger from additional requirements and technical recommendations, and advice provided was at times inconclusive, inconsistent or inaccurate, for example as regards the procedural implications of the boundary modification;
- The requirements for the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger were at times framed or perceived as a negotiable UNESCO position, whereas they are in fact based on the binding decision-making of the intergovernmental World Heritage Committee;
- The framework guiding the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger has been inconsistent and terminology has changed over the years;
- Technical State Party staff was apparently not directly involved in decisive World Heritage exchange at all times leading to indirect communication about complex and at times sensitive matters;
- Staff turnover in all involved institutions likewise seems to have compromised the continuity and effectiveness of communication.

It appears that such communication barriers have created unhelpful room for interpretation. This report therefore distinguishes the discussion about the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger from any other technical recommendations throughout chapters 3, 4 and 5 for clarity. The mission also proposes a pragmatic and coherent way forward to overcome ambiguity and reframe the State Party's management response accordingly. While fully respecting the established formal communication channels under the Convention, direct and more systematic communication at the working level is strongly encouraged among EWCA, IUCN and the World Heritage Centre. Ideally, the State Party may wish to consider EWCA participation at future World Heritage Committee sessions. Should funding be a decisive bottleneck, development partners are encouraged to consider support in this regard.

#### 3.1 Threats and Issues and the List of World Heritage in Danger

For all the complexity and at times differing opinions, the on-going efforts towards the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger reveal important common denominators. Put simply, requirements and guidance have centred around two main themes at all times:

- The size and boundary configuration of SMNP and implications thereof;
- The difficult balance between nature conservation and the needs and aspirations of growing, resource-dependent local communities in and around SMNP.

There is widespread agreement that these common denominators adequately capture the key challenges and management needs. It is also widely acknowledged that all governmental levels of the State Party have demonstrated enormous commitment and have made major investments under challenging circumstances. More than tripling the original surface area of the national park is undoubtedly the single most important milestone to enhance SMNP's conservation (and restoration) prospects. The recent gazetting of SMNP's new boundaries has formally concluded this process at the national level, and all involved deserve major credit for this achievement.

During the mission, it became clear that there are competing views on the World Heritage implications of the modified national park boundaries and how these may or may not relate to the pending removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger. This lack of clarity appears to have caused considerable frustration and bears the risk of a continued deadlock in terms of the pending formalization of the boundary modification under the Convention. The mission acknowledges that the interpretation of some of the formal World Heritage documentation is not entirely straightforward. As a first step, the mission attempted to establish common ground on the current situation with the State Party. The result is summarized hereafter:

- The formally inscribed property continues to be the area inscribed in 1978 even though the inscribed boundaries legally ceased to exist and have since given room to a fundamentally different boundary configuration of SMNP today;
- The resulting discrepancy between SMNP and the property is not a satisfactory status quo. The eventual harmonization of the boundaries of SMNP and the World Heritage property is therefore widely considered to constitute a plausible and desirable objective, which could also be used to harmonize the currently differing names of the national park and the property;
- In addition to significantly increasing SMNP's overall surface area, the new boundaries were also adapted to exclude some settlements from the property itself. In other words, the boundary modification encompasses several small excisions from the property. These areas were in effect legally degazetted in 2015. While a perfectly conceivable measure and negligible in terms of the overall surface area, this adds weight to the necessity of a formal recognition of the new boundaries under the World Heritage Convention for the simple reason that any excision from a World Heritage property should be very carefully reviewed;
- The combined alignment and expansion of the national park boundaries constitute a milestone in the history of SMNP, the importance of which cannot be overestimated.

Despite this common ground, it became clear during the mission that the procedural implications were misunderstood. It was argued by some involved on behalf of the State Party that a "Minor Boundary Modification" or even an informal notification of the new boundaries might be appropriate, whereas a "Significant Boundary Modification" was perceived by some as overly demanding and possibly associated with risks. Such misunderstandings can be unambiguously clarified as follows:

- An informal notification is not a procedure foreseen for any boundary modifications and can thus be excluded as a viable option;
- The combination of more than tripling the surface area and excising some other areas can objectively not be considered a "minor" change. Even though the Operational Guidelines do not define the difference between "minor" and "significant" boundary modifications in quantitative terms, a technical appreciation of the nature and scope of change, and World Heritage precedents imply that a Significant Boundary Modification is the only possible procedure to be applied in the given situation;

- Removing any possibly remaining ambiguity, the World Heritage Committee has positioned itself by explicitly requesting the State Party to submit a Significant Boundary Modification in binding decisions.

It is therefore beyond debate that a Significant Boundary Modification is due to harmonize the current discrepancy between the boundaries of SMNP and the property. As per paragraph 165 of the *Operational Guidelines*, and as explicitly noted by the World Heritage Committee (Decisions **40 COM 7A.43** and **35 COM 7A.9**), it is critical to understand that any Significant Boundary Modification amounts to a new nomination. The mission wishes to strongly emphasize this explicit and unambiguous stipulation of the *Operational Guidelines* to move beyond several years of doubts in this regard. The State Party is encouraged to take advantage and simultaneously use the procedure to also harmonize the different names of the property and SMNP.

When the above implication of Significant Boundary Modifications was discussed during the mission, the State Party representatives accepted the guidance by the mission. At the same time, the State Party plausibly argued that, in their interpretation, the Significant Boundary Modification could formally not constitute a condition for the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger. The mission agrees that this can indeed not be derived from the *Operational Guidelines* or applicable Committee decisions and that past missions appear to have positioned themselves ambiguously in this regard. The mission therefore agrees with the State Party that it would be inappropriate to interpret the Significant Boundary Modification - and thereby the pending new nomination - as a condition for removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger. This is because the World Heritage Committee endorsed the formally still valid boundaries of the property as appropriate at the time of inscription, which is the decisive reference point in time. Challenging the boundaries as inscribed per se would therefore amount to challenging the inscription decision.

The mission therefore is of the opinion that the requirements for the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger should not encompass the procedure of the Significant Boundary Modification, i.e. a new nomination. Rather, the Significant Boundary Modification and, by implication, the new nomination should be regarded as a separate and parallel Committee request.

Nevertheless, the mission is confident that the two parallel requirements can and should be addressed jointly by the State Party. Whereas previous missions did not clearly position themselves in this regard, the mission firmly believes that the new nomination represents an attractive opportunity and well-structured framework to guide all immediate follow-up under the World Heritage Convention in SMNP. As any World Heritage nomination, the unavoidable new nomination of SMNP will have to demonstrate compliance with World Heritage requirements. Doing so is not identical but very similar to what needs to be demonstrated to justify removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger. Therefore, progress towards a successful nomination can support progress towards the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger according to a clearly defined pathway with determined timelines.

In case of a successful nomination, the State Party would be in an ideal position to demonstrate compliance with World Heritage expectations and thereby also for the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger. In case the independent IUCN evaluation of the nomination will reveal needs for improvement, the State Party will not worsen its position but would receive updated and concrete guidance on further management responses needed to achieve a successful nomination. This in turn would also be beneficial to guide the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger. In the view of the mission, there is no realistic risk of a new nomination leading to a recommendation for non-inscription, a concern some State Party colleagues expressed. Such a conclusion would be incompatible with the on-going process to remove the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger and would be

contradictory to the Committee requests since Decision **35 COM 7A.9** to submit a proposal for boundary modification.

In the view of the mission, the new nomination requested by the Committee is by no means an insurmountable obstacle. The effort can build upon a draft nomination already produced by the State Party and a wealth of readily available information from existing plans, strategies and studies. IUCN, the World Heritage Centre and EWCA partners can be expected to support and are strongly encouraged to do so.

Therefore, after careful consideration and consultation, the mission encourages the State Party to move to a pragmatic new way forward as follows: as the State Party is requested by the Committee to address both the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger and the new nomination, it may wish to merge both processes to improve clarity, efficiency and synergy with immediate effect. Structuring the World Heritage follow-up from now on around the new nomination would constitute a reframing of all management responses under the World Heritage Convention focussing on one clearly defined procedure and associated timelines. It is recommended that the new nomination become the focus and structure of World Heritage follow-up in SMNP.

#### **Recommendation 1**

Prioritize the preparation of a Significant Boundary Modification on the understanding that it amounts to a new nomination, and use the process as a coherent framework to structure and coordinate the implementation of actions towards meeting the Desired State of Conservation for the Removal of the Property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR), and other Committee requests with immediate effect.

As its second of two overarching observations, the mission notes that the current General Management Plan (GMP) is due for renewal in 2019. The current GMP refers to a much smaller earlier surface area of SMNP prior to the modification and gazettement of the national park boundaries. In other words, the scope of the existing GMP can provide limited guidance only for SMNP in its current, significantly modified configuration and adjacent areas in the sense of a functional buffer zone.

It is therefore not too early to initiate the elaboration of the next GMP. The mission recommends that the elaboration of the next GMP should start as soon as possible as the main platform to discuss and structure future management, fully considering the World Heritage status and its implications. The new GMP can build upon the existing GMP and a wealth of information and guidance elaborated since, in particular as regards livestock grazing and tourism management. The elaboration of the new GMP can and should be directly linked to the new nomination, as both can be considered complementary efforts. Distilled to their essence, both the new nomination and the new GMP will have to use, update and document much of the same descriptive information and analysis, lay out objectives for the management and conservation and outline the activities required to meet these objectives.

#### **Recommendation 2**

Initiate the evaluation of the current 2009-2019 General Management Plan (GMP) to inform the next GMP, and extend the geographical scope to include the expanded Simien Mountains National Park (SMNP) boundaries as soon as possible to discuss and structure future management, taking advantage of the exercise to inform the new nomination of SMNP and vice-versa.

### **3.2 Further Conservation and Management Issues**

#### **3.2.1 Management and Governance**

Local participation in protected areas management is typically described as a continuum ranging from humble forms of consultation to fundamental or even leading roles for indigenous

peoples and/or local communities in management. The current GMP acknowledges that the initial establishment of SMNP was not based on any consultation with, let alone consent of, local communities. The GMP also notes forced resettlements in the early years of SMNP resulting in predictable and strong opposition to SMNP. This constitutes a common and challenging legacy of top-down management, which is likely to influence the local perception of the national park to this day. For several years, expatriate wardens led the early management of SMNP, which in all likelihood did not add to any sense of local ownership.

Over time, some elements of consultation and participation have been introduced. For example, some of the recent boundary modifications eventually resulting in the gazetting of the current boundaries were based on intensive consultations with local communities. The more recent resettlements, in particular of Gich, are considered to be voluntary relocations and have undoubtedly respected incomparably higher standards than the forced early resettlements out of SMNP. It is also widely acknowledged that tourism has brought economic benefits to some of the local residents through direct employment as scouts, guides and cooks etc. It is thus fair to say that SMNP has been moving towards still modest but increasingly meaningful local participation over its lifespan. At the same time, management continues to largely follow a conventional top-down management approach driven by government. At the level of existing decision-making, the governance fully resides with governmental actors, a situation IUCN guidance refers to as “Governance Type A”. The mission strongly recommends further investment in moving towards more meaningful and systematic participation of local communities in the management and eventually the governance, i.e. the decision-making level. The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value adopted for the property calls for “full participation of local communities”, including as regards the GMP.

### **Recommendation 3**

Consolidate the participation of local communities in the management and eventually the governance (decision-making) of the property and SMNP.

The shifting of responsibility for the management of SMNP from federal to regional management authority and back is a sovereign and internal State Party decision. The mission does not consider it its role and mandate to position itself in this regard while noting that the broader decentralization debate suggests conservation benefits and risks associated with both central and decentralized leadership. The mission wishes to put on record that the effective governance and management of SMNP necessarily requires functional communication, coordination and cooperation among all governmental levels regardless of federal versus regional leadership.

The active role of external supporters raises further governance and management questions and opportunities, which require agreement on defined roles. The mission encountered a consensus on the positive role played by various partners, namely the longstanding Austrian Development Agency (ADA) project, which was consistently credited with much appreciated contributions over some 15 years. EWCA staff and other governmental representatives at federal and regional levels expressed the hope that ADA will resume its cooperation in and around SMNP and that the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) might simultaneously intensify its contributions. Hope was likewise expressed that the German Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) would facilitate additional support, which was reported to be under current discussion. It is clear that the effectiveness of SMNP’s management will also depend on clearly defined tasks of all involved and adequate communication channels between and among all partners. The activities of all external partners require full coordination to avoid duplication, competition, contradictory guidance and inefficient use of limited resources. Both the new nomination and the use of the elaboration of the next GMP as an organizing structure lend themselves as platforms for donor coordination.

**Recommendation 4**

Ensure clear and agreed communication, coordination and cooperation mechanisms between the management authority of SMNP and international institutions operating at SMNP to maximize the coherence and effectiveness of external support and advice.

**3.2.2 Natural Resource Use, Settlements and Resettlements**

Most protected areas around the world have been inhabited and used at varying degrees and often still are, whether legally or illegally. SMNP is no exception but a prime example of a very longstanding human history in an area today formally designated as a protected area. From the day of its establishment, SMNP faced the question of the compatibility between human land and resource use and the maintenance of its extraordinary nature conservation values. Given the ancient human occupation of the Simien Mountains and the continued high conservation values, the case for incompatibility per se is not logically tenable. The categorical exclusion of people living in and/or using resources from inside properties is also not a concept the World Heritage Convention promotes or requires. According to paragraph 119 of the Operational Guidelines, a State Party's responsibility under the Convention is not to exclude local resource use but to "ensure that such sustainable use or any other change does not impact adversely on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property", whilst also noting that "for some properties, human use would not be appropriate". It would be difficult to argue that the latter notion should be categorically applied to the property in light of the longstanding human history and striking rural poverty.

Nevertheless, the pressure on the property and SMNP is enormous, with the number of people in the surroundings rapidly increasing. It would be naïve to assume that the needs of a growing number of economically poor people directly dependent on subsistence agriculture, livestock husbandry and wild biodiversity products can easily be balanced with the conservation of a small remnant of a globally significant ecosystem. CEPF (2012) suggested that only some ten per cent of the once vast afro-alpine hotspot remained "more or less intact" at the time of data collection. If Amhara, Ethiopia and the world wish to maintain one of the few significant leftovers of a unique and vanishing ecosystem, along with the only population of Walia Ibex and the critical ecosystem services of the Simien Mountains, now is the time for difficult decision-making and addressing the conflicts between community needs and conservation. This will inevitably restrict and regulate natural resource use and extraction and in some cases amount to full bans. Balancing needs should not imply a generic exclusion of any natural resource use in the view of the mission.

The mission agrees with most observers that the still relatively small national park set up to conserve the last remnants of globally significant vegetation and the only occupied habitat of the Walia Ibex is not a place that should be converted into marginal agricultural plots, as has reportedly happened in some eight per cent of SMNP (EWCA et al., 2015). Major progress has been made in reducing the cultivated area in SMNP and crop cultivation should eventually be phased out within SMNP. As for livestock grazing, the mission agrees with most colleagues consulted that an approach distinguishing zones of no-grazing, grazing, and hay-making appears to be the best available option. Starting implementation of corresponding measures is showing encouraging results, in particular the visible natural regeneration of vegetation following the exclusion of grazing. Existing studies and proposals, including the Grazing Pressure Reduction Strategy (EWCA et al., 2015), a recent analysis of trends in livestock numbers (EWCA, 2015) and recommendations expressed in past Reactive Monitoring mission reports, provide valuable guidance and food for thought, while not amounting to a comprehensive strategy with sufficiently understood social consequences in the view of the mission. The available information and guidance should be fully considered and refined for use in decision-making and guidance, including the next GMP. The mission considers zonation and user agreements to be the most promising foundations of balancing conservation

with legitimate local subsistence use. User agreements are compatible with both Paragraph 119 of the Operational Guidelines and Article 5.2(e) of the Wildlife Development, Conservation and Utilization Council of Ministers Regulations No. 163/2008.

#### **Recommendation 5**

Build on the existing Grazing Pressure Reduction Strategy to consolidate and refine realistic and effective guidance on livestock grazing in the property and the larger SMNP, including by investing in a better understanding of the consequences of reducing grazing for local communities, entering into user agreements and establishing conflict management mechanisms.

Given the widespread loss and degradation of woody vegetation across SMNP, the extraction of timber and firewood is not compatible with urgently needed conservation and restoration needs. As for other natural resources, such as apiculture and collection of medicinal plants the above-mentioned user agreements should be applied on the condition that use does not compromise conservation objectives.

#### **Recommendation 6**

Establish negotiated user agreements with local communities defining both rights and responsibilities associated with natural resource use.

Resettlements of communities can occur for many reasons. It is well documented that they are associated with severe risks, including landlessness, marginalization and social disintegration. In a protected area context, resettlements are an extreme and highly controversial manifestation of the common dilemma between formal conservation objectives and local communities. Resettlements raise numerous legal, ethical and conceptual questions. Hostility to formal conservation is but one of the well-documented risks of resettlements, as noted in the current GMP. Contrary to some views expressed to the mission, resettlements are not a World Heritage requirement. The GMP provision to reduce the “overall human settlement (...) preferably to zero” is an extreme position in the view of the mission. It is debatable whether this provision is realistic or even desirable. However, it is clear that this position cannot be derived from the World Heritage status. None of the benchmarks, corrective measures or DSOCR indicators adopted or applicable Committee decisions uses the term resettlement or one of its many synonyms. Indicator 6 of the DSOCR implies resettlements though by establishing the objective of a “40 per cent reduction in the number of households resident in the property”.

In recent years, the villages of Gich (Geech) and Arkwazi (Arkwasiye) were resettled out of the property. The first case is considered to constitute a voluntary resettlement on the grounds that people were living under increasingly precarious circumstances to the point that financially supported resettlement became an attractive option. It is obviously not possible to provide a conclusive judgment of such a sensitive undertaking based on a short visit. Nevertheless, the mission notes a critical contribution by Endeshaw (n.d.) suggesting important opposition to the resettlement. It is also fair to say that there is no reason to assume that communities homogenously adopt a uniform position on a resettlement. Therefore, even voluntary settlements are likely to affect individuals unwilling to resettle. Reddy (2016 and 2015) provide helpful documentation of the Gich Resettlement Project, which the following overview selectively draws upon:

- Gich was a traditional village comprising some 250 permanent households, centrally located in the property and depending mostly on subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry;
- Resettlement was sought on the grounds of both conservation and increasingly precarious living conditions;

- Resettlement is based on a federal-regional agreement and in line with the GMP, Ethiopian Law and World Bank standards and principles;
- International support adds a layer of both support and scrutiny to the sensitive process, accompanying the difficult governmental decision;
- The host community is the town of Debark, i.e. the residents of Gich were moved from a rural to an urban setting according to their stated preference;
- A Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) guides the process and a Gich Resettlement Project Team consists of actors from a wide variety of agencies, including EWCA, and all involved subnational governmental and administrative levels, as well as the Gich Community Resettlement Committee (CRC);
- A one-time lump sum cash payment is the main compensation mechanism.

Analysis by Reddy (2016 and 2015) identified important risks, for example associated with the maintenance of social structures and integration with host communities; loss of agricultural land for a community entirely depending on subsistence agriculture; lack of strategies and plans to maintain livestock as a key household asset at the resettlement site; lack of strategies and plans for livelihood restoration in an entirely different environment; and possible encroachment on the areas vacated by the resettlement. The author also notes some frustration about funding issues, including a lack of clarity about timing of compensation payments and livelihood supports.

In 2007, some 160 households of the village of Arkwazi were resettled from a narrow wildlife corridor connecting the property with a then new extension to the national park. The nearby host location named Kayit is just outside of the boundaries of SMNP. Arkwazi is not located within the property and may thus be considered of secondary importance for the purpose of this report. The location of the former village is today within the national park. The available documentation illustrates fundamental differences to the parameters of the Gich resettlement, including history, religion, land use, livelihood systems and an urban versus a rural host community. The important message is that there can be no blueprints for resettlements, even when they take place in the same protected area.

Tiru et al. (2012) and Tiru (2011) report that the former Arkwazi villagers were satisfied with the infrastructure and services offered in the new location. However, the authors argue that the resettlement compromised the livelihood options of many villagers who had engaged in commerce in the old village. Arkwazi used to be a traditional market place located on a pass along an old trading route rather than a historic place of settlement. The authors argue that the loss of livelihood options ended up resulting in a need to increase livestock numbers and thereby intensified grazing pressure, including in the original location of Arkwazi. Such findings are a reminder that unexpected consequences of resettlements can and do occur. Resettlements should be the last resort and can only be justified in a protected area context when severe impacts on exceptional conservation values coincide with a willingness to resettle on a voluntary basis. It is clear that all possible care should be taken in such cases to ensure that the consequences are assessed, understood, monitored and mitigated to the degree possible, and applicable laws and standards are fully respected.

#### **Recommendation 7**

Ensure the continued monitoring and compliance of the Gich and Arkwazi community resettlements with all national laws and international policy and guidance.

### **3.2.3 Road and Energy Infrastructure**

The direct and indirect impacts of road access in protected areas are well documented. It is therefore no surprise that the roads within SMNP have been sparking controversy and explicitly contributed to the rationale to inscribe the property on the List of World Heritage in

Danger in 1996. The road crossing the property along one of the main escarpments since the late 1990s has obvious benefits for communities previously not accessible by road, tourism development and park operations. However, all roads are also a source of direct and indirect impacts and risks, such as erosion, invasive alien species (IAS), road-kill, littering, easy access and disturbance. This is the reason why “constructing roads or other structures or spoiling or disturbing the existing natural landscapes” is today prohibited in Ethiopian national parks by Article 5.1/l) of the Wildlife Development, Conservation and Utilization Council of Ministers Regulations No. 163/2008.

The road built during the Italian occupation winding down the Limalimo escarpment has been constructed much earlier and has been located within SMNP since its relatively recent westward expansion only. The road offers stunning views but also comes with environmental impacts, for example by providing access to naturally regenerating montane forests. The anticipated impacts of a previously planned additional road further east could apparently be mitigated by agreeing on a less damaging route according to the 2009 UNESCO/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission. The present mission could not visit the area but it is understood that the route eventually agreed represents a compromise, which was described as acceptable by EWCA representatives.

Unfortunately, the more recent expansion of road infrastructure further east affected some of the most valuable areas added to SMNP (see map 5 in Annex 6), known to be relatively intact habitat for all three flagship species. Thereby the conservation gains of adding valuable habitat were to a certain degree compromised by the simultaneous governmental decision to construct the road. The exact impacts of the road do not appear to be studied in detail but both construction and use of the road have no doubt resulted in considerable disturbance. Truck traffic reportedly interferes with tourism, especially night traffic in the immediate vicinity of tourism camps along the road. Restricting the road to daytime use only partially solved the dilemma. During the rainy seasons, trucks regularly get stuck on the winding and muddy mountain roads.

As the decommissioning of the existing roads within the property and the wider SMNP was widely considered unrealistic, the alternative management response accepted by the State Party is to construct an alternative route, which will be mostly located outside of the property and SMNP. The middle section of the road will run through the SMNP, but outside of the current property boundaries, for a length of approximately 10 km. Construction of this road has already been initiated. In this way, the State Party aims to divert most of the public use away from the existing main road crossing the property and SMNP in order to protect sensitive afro-alpine areas of critical wildlife importance. Upon completion of the alternative road, the existing road will be restricted to daytime use to all traffic and truck traffic will be stopped altogether. While the State Party commitment to this major measure and investment was reaffirmed to the mission, the implementation has been facing serious obstacles so far. As noted in the 2017 State Party's state of conservation report, completion of the alternative road is pending due to insufficient capacity of the involved construction companies. The regional government confirmed to the mission that it recently transferred the responsibility to the governmental Defense Construction Company. Representatives of both the federal and regional governments expressed confidence that the alternative road will be completed within one to two years.

The mission considers that the alternative route will contribute to reducing the impacts, namely by removing truck traffic from SMNP. There is a consensus that monitoring and mitigation measures are nevertheless necessary to minimize disturbance and other negative impacts of all roads within the property and SMNP. From a tourism perspective, the State Party has the option to develop the existing roads into an attractive scenic route offering spectacular views and wildlife viewing opportunities. Doing so would require identification and implementation of all possible measures to minimize disturbance and other impacts.

**Recommendation 8**

Finalize the construction of the alternative road, which will mostly be located outside of the property and SMNP, to reduce the impacts of the main road within the property and SMNP.

**Recommendation 9**

Systematically incorporate management of all road infrastructures into the management of SMNP starting with the new General Management Plan (GMP), in particular as regards impact monitoring and mitigation.

The power transmission line running in parallel to the main road along one of the major escarpments is comparatively modest and can hardly be described as major infrastructure. Nevertheless it does affect the exceptional visual beauty and integrity along a main route used by visitors. In addition to aesthetic considerations, fatal bird collisions were reported to occur in areas known for high densities of various raptors. Comparable to the road infrastructure, the power transmission line represents a dilemma between development needs and conservation objectives. Given that the route of the existing power line was described as questionable on technical grounds due to the extreme exposure to harsh environmental conditions and frequent thunderstorms, the mission supports the State Party's commitment to re-align the power transmission line. The authorities in charge reaffirmed an earlier written commitment to relocate the power line to run parallel to the above-mentioned alternative road. The mission recommends that the State Party be encouraged to comply with its commitment as soon as possible along with the completion of the alternative road.

**Recommendation 10**

Relocate the power transmission line from its current alignment next to the main road running through the property and SMNP, to be in line with the new alternative road in conformity to the State Party's commitment, upon completion of the alternative road currently under construction.

**3.2.4 Tourism Management**

There is no shortage of literature and experience about the interface between tourism and protected areas. It is fair to say that tourism is a double-edged sword, as it is always accompanied by benefits, impacts and risks. Most agree that the overriding objective of protected areas tourism should be to maximize the benefits while minimizing the impacts and risks. This seemingly obvious orientation is far from trivial. From a conservation perspective, the main objectives of tourism targeting protected areas encompass economic benefits for local communities and conservation financing, creation of alternative jobs and income to reduce direct pressure on natural resources and to increase the local and political acceptance of protected areas. Finally, visitor education is expected to raise awareness of nature conservation.

Due to the civil war and comparatively difficult past access to the region, tourism development is a relatively recent activity in SMNP despite the area's obvious attractiveness. ANRS has pioneered a structured approach and established a first generation of infrastructure with full support by ADA. The joint efforts continued after the main management responsibility was shifted to EWCA. Over the last years visitor numbers have been strongly increasing, establishing SMNP as a well-known and appreciated destination even though recent security issues in the region and the on-going national state of emergency serve as a reminder that tourism depends on many factors, some of which are far beyond the control of site management.

The current GMP dedicates one of five thematic programmes to tourism management based on an earlier Tourism Master Plan dated 2007. The programme provides remarkably nuanced guidance, laying out the objectives of contributions to conservation financing and community benefits etc. The programme also includes a comprehensive SLOT (strengths, limitations,

opportunities, threats) analysis. In the view of the mission, the GMP offers an adequate guiding framework, which in principle can readily be used for the next GMP with some updating and refining.

Despite many positive developments, including as regards capacity development and community benefits, there are implementation challenges though and many observable facets of tourism are not compatible with the provisions of the GMP. Much of the tourism infrastructure is in need of major re-investment, often amounting to a need for re-design and re-construction. Other concerns reported to, or observed by, the mission are poor hygienic conditions in the camps and an apparently limited consideration of the environmental impacts of tourism, even at the level of disturbance of the main flagship species. Some concern was expressed about water supply and the disposal of solid and liquid waste. Support is needed and the hope was consistently expressed that ADA and AWF will be able to make meaningful further contributions in this regard.

In its Guiding Principles for tourism, the current GMP explicitly notes that “new infrastructure should be built outside the national park”. Nevertheless a new lodge was recently constructed, and new lodges have been proposed leading to controversy about their possible locations. It is clear that infrastructure development is sensitive, especially when it is incompatible with the valid overarching GMP and applicable law (“constructing roads or other structures” is a “prohibited activity” according to Regulations No. 163/2008). The location of new lodges should not be driven by narrow tourism market criteria but be based on solid environmental and social impact assessments using the full range of decision-making criteria. The mission recommends that new lodges within the small national park be avoided in line with the GMP. The obvious alternative would be to identify and negotiate attractive locations in the immediate vicinity of SMNP. The lodges should provide easy access to tourism attractions rather than being physically located inside the park, as is being practiced in many protected areas around the world.

#### **Recommendation 11**

Strengthen the implementation of tourism management, building upon the comprehensive provisions of the existing GMP and other readily available guidance.

#### **Recommendation 12**

Re-invest in the maintenance of existing tourism infrastructure while restricting new infrastructure to outside of the property and SMNP, fully considering all environmental and social impacts.

### **3.2.5 Wildlife Management**

The most dramatic form of human-wildlife conflicts reported to the mission were occasional attacks on human beings by leopards, and livestock predation, by leopard but also by common jackal and spotted hyena (see also Yihune et al., 2009). An earlier study by Yihune et al. (2008) showed crop damage by Gelada but suggested that the risks are manageable for local communities. Some livestock predation by Ethiopian Wolf appears to occur but was not reported as a major concern. To the degree possible the full range of measures developed elsewhere, ranging from livestock protection to compensation schemes should be considered, along with systematic monitoring to understand the scale and trends of all livestock predation.

Most consulted by the mission agree that otherwise the main human-wildlife conflict is direct competition for increasingly scarce land (habitat). Much of the habitat supporting SMNP's native biodiversity is heavily affected by loss and degradation from agriculture and high levels of livestock grazing. Overgrazing directly affects all three flagship species, as Walia Ibex and Gelada are grazers and the Ethiopian Wolf preys mostly on rodents associated with native afro-alpine vegetation.

Direct disturbance, including from traffic and tourism, is another concern, although there appear to be no detailed studies of these subjects. Disease transmission between *Walia Ibex* and domestic goats, dogs and wild canids and possibly primates and human beings are underlying concerns but were not considered to be decisive factors at this point in time in SMNP by any of the colleagues consulted by the mission.

Hunting is prohibited with poaching and retaliation killings of predators reported to be minor concerns, even though opinions on the level of such incidents varied. While some colleagues consulted categorically excluded any occurrence of poaching, others considered occasional poaching in remote areas rare but not uncommon, including of *Walia Ibex*. Reasons for poaching not being major current concern were explained as follows:

- Clear and well-known regulations, relatively effective law enforcement and very severe sanctions, including imprisonment;
- Cultural respect and effective social control as regards *Walia Ibex*;
- Limited direct conflict between human beings, livestock and Ethiopian Wolf, which primarily preys on rodents.

A brief overview of key messages regarding SMNP's three flagship species follows hereafter:

### ***Walia Ibex***

The iconic *Walia Ibex* (*Capra walie*) is the main flagship species and symbol of SMNP and the property. The iconic species is locally endemic to the Simien Mountains, i.e. it occurs nowhere else on earth. The *Walia Ibex* is featured in the logos of both EWCA and SMNP and many others, including Ethiopia's national soccer team, known as the "Walias". Its symbolic and cultural value is of national importance and certainly one factor in the attractiveness of and attention paid to SMNP. The species contributed to the initial designation of SMNP, its subsequent inscription on the World Heritage List and – in response to severe population declines - also to the property's inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger. Comparable to the Alpine Ibex (*Capra ibex*), the species could be brought back from the brink of extinction by overhunting in a remarkable effort and conservation success story. Many years of civil war took their toll on the *Walia* population but the species did not perish and more recently has been recovering. While still fragile, the conservation prospects of the species are probably better than they have been in decades due to the important expansion of the national park, which explicitly considered suitable *Walia* habitat. It was suggested to the mission that the combination of strict laws, social control and cultural norms add up to promising enabling conditions.

The most recent IUCN Red List status of the *Walia Ibex*, slightly outdated, is Endangered (EN, Geberemedhin et al., 2008), down-listed from previous status as Critically Endangered (CR). The Red List information acknowledges signs of population increase while pointing to on-going habitat degradation by human encroachment. The main threats can be summarized as follows:

- Loss, fragmentation and degradation of habitat;
- Historic over-hunting;
- Management breakdown and disarray during the long civil war;
- Occasional conflicts with local farmers due to feeding on cultivated crops;
- Possible risks of disease transmission from and to domestic goats.

The *Walia Ibex* is protected by Ethiopian law and can only be hunted for scientific purposes. For 2004, Geberemedhin et al. (2008) suggested a population of around 500 individuals, up from an estimated 200 to 250 animals in the mid 1990s, slightly more conservative

compared to the estimates reported by the State Party. The most recent State Party reporting suggest a considerable increase over the last years. Direct communication during the mission suggests widespread agreement on an overall stable to positive trend and considerably enhanced conservation prospects due to the expansion of SMNP and efforts to start reducing the competition with domestic livestock. However, the majority of colleagues familiar with SMNP assume that the official population numbers might be too optimistic.

### ***Ethiopian Wolf***

The Ethiopian Wolf (*Canis simensis*) is endemic to the Ethiopian Highlands. The rarest canid in the world, the species is today reduced to a few small and isolated populations in the highest elevations of the Ethiopian Highlands. While not included on the CITES Appendices, the Ethiopian Wolf is strictly protected by law throughout Ethiopia. Marino et al. (2013) report overall population estimates of some 250 mature individuals only in the most recent IUCN Red List information, classifying the species as Endangered, “narrowly below the threshold for uplisting to Critically Endangered”. The threats to the species can be summarized as follows:

- Major habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation of the vanishing afro-alpine grasslands and heathlands due to high-altitude subsistence agriculture and overgrazing by domestic livestock;
- Increasingly scarce rodents depending on the disappearing afro-alpine vegetation are critical prey species;
- Vulnerability to diseases like rabies and canine distemper;
- Interactions with domestic dogs, including direct competition, aggression, disease transmission and genetic introgression;
- Human persecution associated with conflicts over livestock losses and some illegal commercialization of skins or other body parts and occasional accidental road kills.

The small population in SMNP is among the most important ones even though the Bale Mountains are home to the largest remaining population. For 2010, the IUCN/Species Survival Commission (SSC) Canid Specialist Group (2011) estimated 52 individuals in the Simien Mountains of which 28 were mature. Numbers provided by the State Party in formal reporting are higher and indicate a consistent positive trend in SMNP. Regardless of the reasons for differing population estimates there seems to be a consensus that the trend over the last decade is at least stable and probably positive. This is plausible given that livestock removal in some areas of critical habitat has permitted the vegetation to recover, thereby improving the prey availability for the Ethiopian Wolf. The overall trend disguises that Ethiopian wolves appear to be absent from some previously occupied areas on the margins of the park.

It is noteworthy that there appears to be no evidence of wolf mortality due to rabies or canine distemper viruses in the Simien Mountains, two diseases which have heavily impacted on the species in the Bale Mountains. Wolf killings are uncommon and are not considered to be among the main threats. Single cases in SMNP could be linked to conflict over livestock predation or intended commercialization of skins. Direct human-wildlife conflict is not pronounced due to the wolf's primary prey consisting of rodents, and even though some livestock predation does occur, retaliatory killings are a rare occurrence. Sustaining the conservation and restoration of afro-alpine habitat made possible by the expansion of the national park while monitoring population trends and key threats are permanent management needs in the foreseeable future.

### ***Gelada***

Geladas (*Theropithecus gelada*) are charismatic primates living in unusually large, socially complex groups. Both the species and the genus are endemic to Ethiopia. Often incorrectly referred to as a baboon species, Geladas display an extremely complex and sophisticated social behaviour; for example, the vocal complexity shows fascinating parallels to human

speech. Geladas are also unique by being the only living primate feeding exclusively on plants, mostly grasses. SMNP hosts the largest population and density of Gelada in Ethiopia, and is the only population found within a national park. The exact number of geladas in SMNP is unknown and the available numbers vary widely. Beehner et al. (2007) report 2460 individuals in SMNP in its then extension with 4264 Geladas counted in a larger area, roughly equivalent to the current surface area of SMNP. Given that population trends are widely considered to be stable to slightly increasing, a comparable number can be assumed today. This is a low figure compared to previous unpublished and recent EWCA estimates. The striking discrepancy between various population numbers reported to the mission could indicate a risk of overestimating population numbers. It is clear that it would be beneficial to move to a standardized and agreed monitoring approach to establish a consensus on realistic population numbers and trends.

Next to the Walia Ibex and Ethiopian Wolf, the Gelada is a somewhat less prominent flagship mammal. In terms of their ecological role, conservation value and exceptional attractiveness for wildlife viewing, the Gelada deserves equal management attention. Geladas are also the easiest and probably the most interesting species to observe in SMNP, leading tourism market specialist to conclude that Geladas might be the “core opportunity” for wildlife-based tourism (AWF, n.d.).

Geladas appear to cope much better with habitat degradation and grazing competition than Walia Ibex and Ethiopian Wolf. Reported good health and reproduction rates in SMNP do not indicate reasons for acute concern and the conservation status is by no means comparable to the vulnerability of Walia Ibex or Ethiopian Wolf. The IUCN Red List classifies the species as Least Concern (LC), noting an overall decreasing trend and past overestimates of the overall population (Gippoliti et al., 2008). Nevertheless, the conservation challenges should not be underestimated and the overall decline increases the relative importance of SMNP as one of the major strongholds of the species with comparatively good conservation prospects. The challenges can be summarized as follows:

- Conversion of land to farming and increasing competition from increasing livestock grazing, pressure, and probably climate change throughout the species distribution;
- Questionable long-term population viability of many small and isolated populations remaining in landscapes dominated by agriculture;
- Potential for increasing human - wildlife conflict (crop-raiding) due to increasing encroachment;
- Contact with livestock carries the risk of disease transmission.

In and around SMNP, the risk of crop-raiding by Geladas commands that crops are not left unattended for long stretches, an undesired but manageable measure, often carried out by children.

The perhaps most overlooked issue is the management of tourist-gelada interactions. While recognizing the species as a highly attractive resource (AWF, n.d.), the tourism strategy does not mention the need to understand and manage disturbance from cars and tourists displacing the geladas many times a day. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that geladas are attracted by garbage near campsites and that tourists feed geladas. Such behavioural change could open up a cascade of further risks, such as risk of injuries to tourists, risk of mutual disease transmission, disruption of natural behaviour, unpleasant tourist experiences, etc.

Geladas deserve more consideration as a significant conservation value and an integral part of the ecosystem and touristic resource. The stable and possibly slightly increasing population in SMNP represents the species' highest density and is the only one within a national park. As priorities, the management of human-gelada interactions is critically important and future

management planning and implementation should include coherent and consistent population monitoring.

In summary, it is conspicuous that all three main flagship species directly depend on the high altitude grasslands, which means that the loss, fragmentation and degradation of that habitat can reasonably be considered to constitute the overarching conservation factors.

#### **Recommendation 13**

Incorporate standardized and replicable monitoring of Walia Ibex, Ethiopian Wolf and Gelada as the three flagship species in routine management, including in relation to disturbance from tourism.

#### **3.2.6 Climate change**

An assessment of climate change and its current and anticipated implications for the property is beyond the scope of this report. Nevertheless it was considered useful to document observations shared by colleagues during the mission:

- Considerably decreasing snowfall over the last years;
- Decreasing water levels in rivers and creeks over the last years;
- Unusually mild temperatures over the last years permitting agriculture in high altitude areas which have never been cultivated in the past due to climatic restrictions;
- Belated start of the rainy season and less predictable precipitation patterns.

It is clear that informal discussions cannot be the foundation of a conclusive analysis. At the same time, the consistency of reported observations indicates reason for concern. While deforestation and other changes in vegetation have undoubtedly influenced the micro-climates and hydrological regime of the Simien Mountains, the reported changes are part of broader patterns largely beyond the scope of site level management. The concerns about climate change add justification to the effort and investment in effective conservation of SMNP as intactness and diversity of ecosystems increase their resilience to change. Conservation is an ever more important contribution to adaptation and the maintenance of ecosystem services under changing conditions. The most tangible implication is that monitoring should routinely and systematically document and track changing weather and climate patterns.

#### **Recommendation 14**

Incorporate simple and replicable climate change monitoring into routine monitoring protocols.

#### **3.2.7 The Property and the wider Afro-alpine Ecosystem**

SMNP is one critically important remnant of a once vast ecosystem, which is today recognized as a highly threatened global conservation priority as the “Eastern Afromontane biodiversity hotspot” (CEPF, 2012). This biodiversity hotspot extends across several countries, Ethiopia being of central importance. World Heritage potential beyond SMNP and existing World Heritage properties within the hotspot (e.g. Rwenzori Mountains National Park in Uganda and Mount Kenya National Park/Natural Forest in Kenya) has repeatedly been suggested. Restricting the view to Ethiopia for the purpose of this report, it deserves to be mentioned that recent IUCN guidance (Bertzky et al., 2013) concretely recommended the nomination of the Bale Mountains in southeastern Ethiopia, another well-known remnant of the Ethiopian afro-alpine ecosystem, which is considerably larger than SMNP. The Bale Mountains have been on the State Party’s Tentative List since 2008 and, during the mission, the State Party reaffirmed strong interest in the nomination of the Bale Mountains.

As explained above, the Significant Boundary Modification of SMNP under the World Heritage Convention necessarily amounts to a new nomination. Given the State Party’s interest in a

possible nomination of the Bale Mountains, two new nominations of sites within the Ethiopian afro-alpine are under current discussion and the State Party confirmed that draft nomination dossiers have been elaborated for both. During the mission, guidance was informally requested on how these two discussed nominations may or may not relate to each other. While neither the focus nor the mandate of the mission, it was considered helpful to offer a technical opinion on the situation as a professional courtesy.

In essence, a key question requiring clarification boils down to the decision between two stand-alone nominations or a serial approach, i.e. one approach encompassing both SMNP and the Bale Mountains and possibly additional components (areas). In response, the mission offers the following considerations:

- The first message of the mission is that the new nomination of SMNP is a binding requirement under the Convention. This removes past speculation about the necessity of a new nomination of SMNP from the debate;
- Bertzky et al. (2013) base their explicit recommendation to consider a World Heritage nomination of the “Ethiopia Bale Mountains / Arsi Cluster” on the results of species irreplaceability analyses and recognition by the Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) due to five locally endemic vertebrates. Along with the Simien Mountains and very few other areas, all of which are located in Ethiopia, the Bale Mountains host one of the last populations of Ethiopian Wolf and in fact the largest. The above pieces of information indicate that the Bale Mountains might qualify as a promising candidate on its own from the perspective of conservation values;
- Besides conservation values, successful World Heritage nominations must demonstrate that the nominated areas also meet defined integrity conditions and management and protection requirements;
- There are similarities between SMNP and the Bale Mountains. Both mountain areas belong to one broader ecosystem recognized as both exceptionally valuable and exceptionally threatened. The Ethiopian Wolf comes to mind as a shared flagship species, even though the two sub-populations are known to be distinct;
- At the same time, there are important differences between SMNP and the Bale Mountains. The two sites are located on different sides of the Rift Valley at considerable distance from each other. The actual ecological connectivity in the sense of functional linkages, wildlife movements and genetic exchange etc. is very limited. While the phenomenon of high faunal and floral endemism is comparable in both places the actual species assemblages are quite distinct. The geomorphology, species composition, endemism and other specific conservation values are markedly distinct. The iconic Walia Ibex also comes to mind as a local endemism unique to the Simien Mountains. The Bale Mountains in turn are set apart by very different and much more extensive forests. Finally, according to the public Tentative List entry, the Bale Mountains boast the largest remaining natural stand of wild coffee genetic stock.

Based on an admittedly superficial analysis of readily available information, the mission concludes that there appears to be no foundation for clear-cut technical advice. The World Heritage List contains precedents for both stand-alone and serial approaches in roughly comparable settings. For example, South Africa’s Cape Floral Region Protected Areas property can be regarded as an explicit effort to organize a very complex and ambitious World Heritage effort under the umbrella of one single serial nomination. By contrast, several natural World Heritage properties were inscribed in Brazil’s Atlantic Forest independently of each other.

From a technical perspective, the best way forward to permit the State Party to make an informed decision would be to conduct a thorough comparative analysis jointly for both nominations. Comparative analyses are mandatory requirements for and central elements of

the justification for any World Heritage nomination. The mission therefore encourages the State Party to proceed as follows, and to collaborate with IUCN in implementing these suggested actions:

- Carry out an assessment of the conservation status of all major remnants of the entire Ethiopian afro-alpine ecosystem to be able to permit an informed and updated judgment of the overall World Heritage potential.
- Conduct a joint and in-depth Comparative Analysis for both SMNP and the Bale Mountains to permit informed decision-making in terms of different nomination options available.

It should furthermore be noted that the above advice is provided by the mission without prejudice to the eventual recommendations made by the IUCN World Heritage Panel, which evaluates all nominations for natural and mixed World Heritage properties.

## 4. ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF CONSERVATION

### 4.1 State of Conservation and the List of World Heritage in Danger

A brief recapitulation of the chronology was considered useful to set the stage for this sub-chapter. The inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 1996 was triggered by declining mammal populations, in particular of Walia Ibex and broader concerns about loss of biodiversity, encroachment and impacts of road construction (Decision **CONF 201 VII.D.32**, Mérida, 1996). The following years were marked both by initial opposition to the inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger and first efforts to structure a management response (see **CONF 208 VII.B.16/18**, Naples 1997; **CONF 203 VII.6**, Kyoto, 1998, **CONF 209 X.A.6**, Marrakesh, 1999; **CONF 204 VIII.8**, Cairns, 2000).

Based on a 2001 WHC/IUCN mission, the World Heritage Committee adopted four benchmarks of a management response in Decision **CONF 208 VIII.30-31** (Helsinki, 2001) as follows:

1. The realignment of the boundary of the Park to exclude the villages along the boundary of the Park;
2. The extension of the Park to include at least Mesarerya and Lemalino Wildlife Reserves;
3. Significant and sustainable reduction in the human population density within the Park, especially within the core area; and
4. Effective conservation within the extended National Park of a larger population of Walia Ibex and Simien Fox.

A joint IUCN/WHC reactive monitoring mission subsequently recommended revision of the above benchmarks (Debonnet et al., 2006), which was adopted by the Committee in **Decision 30 COM 7A.9**, Vilnius, 2006). Following another IUCN/WHC Reactive Monitoring mission in 2009, the benchmarks remained unchanged but have since been referred to as “corrective measures”:

- Corrective Measure 1: Park extension.** Finalize the extension of the Simien Mountains National Park (SMNP) to include the Silki Yared – Kiddis Yared Mountains and the Ras Dejen Mountain with the interlinking corridors;
- Corrective Measure 2: Boundary gazetting.** Gazetting of the new park boundaries, including the extensions of Lemalimo, Mesarerya, the Silki Yared – Kiddis Yared Mountains and the Ras Dejen Mountain as well as the realignment of the boundary to exclude certain villages;

**Corrective Measure 3: Livestock reduction.** Develop a strategy and action plan, as part of the planned management plan revision, to significantly reduce the impact of livestock grazing on the conservation of the property by introducing no grazing and limited grazing zones based on ecological criteria and by setting up a strict management regime in zones where grazing will still be tolerated in the short to medium term, and secure funding for its implementation;

**Corrective Measure 4: Provision of alternative livelihoods.** Develop a strategy and action plan, as part of the planned management plan revision to support the development of alternative livelihoods for the people living within the park as well as its immediate vicinity, in order to limit in the medium term their impact on the natural resources of the property, and secure funding for its implementation.

In its decision **34 COM 7A.9** (Brasília, 2010), the Committee acknowledged that Corrective Measure 1 had been met and, based on the 2009 reactive monitoring mission report, prioritized the remaining measures as follows:

- 1. Boundary gazettement:** Improve the on-the-ground demarcation of the property and finalize its gazettement into national law;
- 2. Livestock reduction:** Review the Grazing Pressure Reduction Strategy to identify priorities and partners and funding for its implementation;
- 3. Alternative livelihoods:** Identify and implement the lessons learned from the recent successful voluntary relocation of 165 households from the village of Arkwasiye, and seek support from development NGO, donors and the government for the provision of alternative livelihoods.

The same decision endorsed six indicators proposed by the 2009 Reactive Monitoring mission to underpin the DSOCR. The mission used these indicators as the most detailed and recent reference for its assessment. The following table presents the six indicators, along with an assessment and further comments in the right column.

DSOCR INDICATOR	STATUS	COMMENTS
<b>ECOLOGICAL INDICATORS</b>		
<b>1. Walia Ibex:</b> The upward trend of the Walia Ibex population within the property is maintained.	The State Party reports on-going upward trends for both species. Given similarities in the overall situation, the mission comments jointly on both flagship species. While the provided population numbers are questioned by some observers for both species, there is widespread agreement that the status of both species has at least stabilized. It is likewise widely acknowledged that the expansion of SMNP significantly enhances the conservation prospects of both species in unprecedented fashion provided effective management. Despite some doubts on the compliance with the two indicators as worded, the mission is confident that the State Party efforts are credible and effective and comply with the spirit and objective of the indicators.	In the view of the mission EWCA, conservation NGOs and researchers should make every effort to move towards joint monitoring according to agreed protocols to establish accepted common ground on the exact status and trend of the two flagship species, adding also the Gelada even though the DSOCR indicators do not refer to this third flagship species.
<b>2. Ethiopian Wolf:</b> The upward trend of the Ethiopian Wolf population within the property is maintained.		

INTEGRITY INDICATORS		
<p><b>3. Gazetting:</b> The new alignment of the boundary is gazetted into national law and a proposal for the modification of the property's boundaries is submitted to the World Heritage Committee.</p>	<p>Confirmation of full compliance as regards the gazetting. No formal document has been submitted by the State Party related to the modification of the property's boundaries.</p>	<p>The gazetting formalizes and consolidates the significant expansion of SMNP, the single most important measure to enhance the conservation prospects of SMNP in the view of the mission. Unfortunately, the wording of the second part of the indicator fails to accurately reflect the procedural requirements. As noted above, and in line with the corrective measures adopted by the Committee, the submission of a Significant Boundary Modification is a separate process and cannot be a requirement for the property to be removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger.</p>
<p><b>4. Grazing:</b> The existing no grazing zones are extended to cover at minimum 30% of the park area (suggested by the mission), a further 20% of the park is designated as 'forage harvesting zones' and closed to grazing (suggested by the mission), the remaining 50% of the park is designated as 'restricted grazing zones' at stocking levels not exceeding 1 TLU/ha (as recommended in the GPRSD).</p>	<p>Despite progress in reducing grazing pressure and visible results thereof in some areas the indicator - as defined and worded - has not been met.</p>	<p>The notion of an approach differentiating grazing, no grazing and forage harvesting (hay-making) areas is supported by the mission. However, the mission is uncertain about the basis of the recommended percentages of areas and stocking levels and whether these constitute agreed, realistic and desirable targets. The mission further notes fundamental differences compared to the more recent Grazing Pressure Reduction Strategy. The mission therefore concludes that the understanding of the situation of livestock grazing within the property and therefore its management options could be much improved through the undertaking of a situation analysis and revising the strategy accordingly; and the indicator in the current form and wording should be revised as recommended below. A possible way forward is discussed in Chapter 5 of this report.</p>
<p><b>5. Agriculture:</b> A minimum 50% reduction in the area of land under cultivation within the SMNP is achieved (using data collected in 2009 as the baseline), and a monitoring scheme is undertaken to determine the extent of cultivation.</p>	<p>The mission was not provided with or otherwise able to get hold of baseline and trend data permitting a definitive assessment of this quantitative indicator. The recent resettlement of Gich has no doubt considerably reduced the agricultural areas in a particularly important central part</p>	

	of the property. The State Party's efforts are credible and effective and comply with the spirit and objective of the indicator.	
<b>6. Population &amp; alternative livelihoods:</b> A 40% reduction in the number of households resident in the property is achieved (using the results of the 2006 alternative livelihoods study as the baseline) and an alternative livelihoods strategy is implemented.	Data made available to or otherwise accessible to the mission was inconclusive, in part because different data sets refer to different points in time and thus different boundary configurations. Therefore, a definitive assessment of this quantitative indicator is likewise not feasible. The order of magnitude seems to be realistic though, in particular as the relocation of Gich moved the largest settlement out of the property. The mission is therefore confident that the spirit and objective of the population indicator has been met. The wording of the second part of the indicator does not permit an assessment.	While alternative livelihood options are needed, in the view of the mission, it is difficult to imagine a corresponding indicator capturing a desirable threshold at a particular point in time. Alternative livelihoods are not a management measure but rather a permanent management requirement. In light of the population growth around SMNP these requirements are increasing and they obviously go well beyond the scope of protected area management.

In summary, the mission considers that the present DSOCR indicators 1, 2, 3 and 5 have been met, with indicator 6 being difficult to quantify but its objective met. In light of the mission findings, the mission recommends that indicator 4 be updated as follows:

**Indicator 4:** *A clear, realistic and funded plan has been adopted to manage and substantially reduce overgrazing in the property to levels that do not impact on its Outstanding Universal Value and implementation of the plan has been initiated.*

As detailed in section 5, the mission proposes a new way forward to structure the final steps. The elaboration of the new GMP and the new nomination to harmonize the property with SMNP in its current configuration can be key instruments in this regard.

#### 4.2 Further Technical Observations

The main observations underpinning the subsequent conclusions and recommendations are summarized hereafter:

- Local community participation in management continues to be modest and has not entered the level of decision-making;
- There appears to be a mismatch between the attractiveness of SMNP, ambitious tourism development plans, the clear framework of the GMP and the actual implementation of tourism policies;
- Limited attention appears to be paid to the impacts of tourism, including in terms of interactions with wildlife;
- There are good prospects for external support, which should be fully coordinated;
- Zonation and user agreements have a great and still largely unexplored potential as management tools;
- The notion of a (functional) buffer zone remains in its infancy;

- The formal World Heritage documentation appears to undervalue the loss and degradation of forests in the property and SMNP by mostly focussing on landscape beauty and the afro-alpine belt and selected species associated with it;
- The formal World Heritage documentation appears to undervalue that many of the challenges in the property are grassland and forest restoration challenges rather than conventional conservation as much of the property has been strongly affected by excessive grazing levels and resource use.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident that all governmental levels of the State Party have demonstrated enormous commitment and have made major and effective investments under challenging circumstances. More than tripling the original surface area of the national park is undoubtedly the single most important milestone to enhance SMNP's conservation (and restoration) prospects. The recent gazetting of SMNP's new boundaries has formally concluded this process at the national level, and all involved deserve major credit for this achievement.

The management responses to all other conservation concerns likewise give rise to cautious optimism. Important further progress has been made against all corrective measures and indicators guiding the DSOCR:

- The populations of Walia Ibex and Ethiopian Wolf are widely assumed to be increasing, or at least stable, even though there is no consensus on the exact population numbers and trends and the vulnerability of both species remains high;
- The number of residents and area of cultivated land within the property are considerably reduced, in particular through the voluntary relocation of the Gich community, until recently the major and centrally located village within the property;
- Building on the existing GPRS, the understanding of the situation of livestock grazing within the property and therefore its management options could be much improved through the undertaking of a situation analysis and revising the strategy accordingly. A Grazing Pressure Reduction Strategy contains a wealth of information and food for thought and should be used to inform the further discussion. Selective implementation has started and is showing promising results in terms of recovery of vegetation and observable return of wildlife. The State Party and implementing partners are fully aware that progress in this regard must be coupled with support to alternative livelihoods.

The State Party has thereby fully complied with many of the requirements established to permit the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger and has made notable progress in all other areas. The mission found it partially challenging to comply with its task to assess progress in the implementation of the corrective measures and towards meeting the DSOCR indicators. The expansion and gazetting of the national park boundaries can be assessed based on an easily verifiable change of a status. The same holds true in principle for settlements and active crop cultivation inside the property. In terms of grazing pressure and alternative livelihoods, the mission struggled to follow and adopt the static quantitative indicators. Addressing the conflicts between community needs and formal conservation are permanent and fundamental management requirements, which depend on a wide range of factors and actors, many beyond the scope of protected area management. The State Party has made notable progress, with only DSOCR indicator 4 on grazing remaining to be implemented, and the mission recommends that this indicator be updated as follows in light of its findings that quantifying grazing areas is not a realistic or a desirable target:

*A clear, realistic and funded plan has been adopted to manage and substantially reduce overgrazing in the property to levels that do not impact on its Outstanding Universal Value and*

*implementation of the plan has been initiated.*

The overall conclusion is therefore that the property is retained on the List of World Heritage in Danger until this final indicator is met.

Some of the frustration about World Heritage processes expressed to the mission is understandable, specifically the lack of communication, and inconsistent guidance on the requirement of a new nomination, including within the GPRS. While mostly a function of the very real and severe conservation challenges rather than the procedures of the Convention, it became clear that the exact World Heritage requirements, such as the Committee requests, mission recommendations and compliance with the Operational Guidelines, often remained vague at the working level. Communication barriers and the inconsistency and inaccuracy of some of the formal World Heritage documentation help explain this negative perception.

The discussions with State Party representatives revealed much room for improvement for the effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention as applied to the property:

- The evolving specifics, wording and terminology of requirements have undoubtedly created room for misunderstandings and perceived ambiguity.
- The procedural implications of the requested expansion and subsequent gazetting of the new boundaries under the World Heritage Convention and how they relate to the List of World Heritage in Danger were not made sufficiently clear in past communication and guidance;
- The explicit World Heritage Committee requests for the submission of a Significant Boundary Modification (**40 COM 7A.43, 35 COM 7A.9**) have generated considerable confusion by being perceived as an additional requirement to the corrective measures and the DSOCR with less than clear implications.

The mission considers that the main conservation challenge and thereby bottleneck for the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger is the continuing lack of clarity on the exact framework for natural resource use within the property and questions regarding the adequacy and chances of implementation of existing policies and plans. In principle, applicable legislation categorically bans consumptive natural resource use in SMNP, including livestock grazing, but it is clear that this is far from the current reality.

While there can be no doubt that severe overgrazing is massively affecting the conservation values of the property and SMNP, and needs to be substantially reduced, the debatable foundation of static quantitative DSOCR indicators is questionable as a decisive reference in this regard. The mission also doubts whether the more recent proposal to exclude 92 per cent of SMNP from any form of grazing proposed in the 2015 Grazing Pressure Reduction Strategy (GPRS) is realistic or even desirable under the given circumstances. It is implausible that impoverished local communities living all around or even in the park agreed to the proposed ban on grazing across large areas of currently used land as the GPRS appears to suggest. It is far from clear what the direct and indirect implications of such an extreme measure would be and the GPRS fails to address such fundamental question marks. The enforcement of the GPRS in its proposed form could well be counterproductive by creating major hostility to the national park. There is also a risk that a de facto open-access regime could be created as is commonly observed when natural resource use is turned illegal but not accompanied by effective law enforcement. In the view of the mission overgrazing rather than grazing is the main problem, which means that the necessary and major reduction of grazing throughout SMNP requires more nuanced debate.

To be clear, there is an urgent need to address and regulate overgrazing and other natural resource extraction. The main elements proposed in the GPRS, zonation and user agreements, are adequate and promising. However, they should be based on a realistic

assessment of the feasibility and consequences, and fully involve the affected communities in its negotiation and indeed be linked to consolidated support for alternative livelihood options.

The removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger is within tangible reach, provided concerted continuation of the on-going management response. Reducing use pressure, while enabling local livelihoods to reduce their direct dependence on the natural resources of the park is a massive and permanent management task for the foreseeable future. The mission does not believe that this complex task can or should be assessed against a static and quantitative indicator of a status. Rather the mission proposes that the State Party be given the opportunity to demonstrate its ability to consolidate a policy and management framework along with a realistic and fundable implementation plan. The way to such a point in time could take advantage of two parallel pending processes as outlined hereafter:

- After years of ambiguity the mission wishes to recall that the World Heritage Committee has explicitly requested the State Party to submit a proposal for a Significant Boundary Modification (**Decisions 40 COM 7A.43 and 35 COM 7A.9**) to harmonize the current discrepancy between the boundaries of SMNP and the World Heritage property;
- As per paragraph 165 of the Operational Guidelines, it is critical to understand that any Significant Boundary Modification amounts to a new nomination;
- The Significant Boundary Modification does not formally constitute a condition for the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger but rather a separate and parallel request by the World Heritage Committee;
- The mission is confident that the two parallel requirements under the Convention can and should be addressed jointly.

The pending new nomination of SMNP represents an attractive opportunity and well-structured framework to address all World Heritage considerations in SMNP while also removing the unhelpful discrepancy between the property and the national park in terms of size and configuration. As any World Heritage nomination, the new nomination of SMNP will have to demonstrate compliance with World Heritage requirements. Doing so is not identical but very similar to what needs to be demonstrated to justify removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger. Thereby progress towards a successful nomination can support progress towards the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger according to a clearly defined pathway with defined timelines. Concretely, given that the effort can build upon a draft nomination already produced by the State Party and a wealth of readily available information from existing plans, strategies and studies the mission considers submission by 1 February 2018 feasible. IUCN, the World Heritage Centre and EWCA partners can be expected to support and are strongly encouraged to do so. A nomination submitted by 1 February 2018 would trigger an independent IUCN evaluation in the second half of 2018. In mid 2019 the World Heritage Committee would take a decision on the nomination. Thereby, the time horizon for immediate World Heritage follow-up would be around two years. Realistically, there are two possible outcomes and scenarios:

- An inscription decision in 2019 would constitute a best-case scenario. As such a decision would confirm compliance with World Heritage expectations, it would logically put the State Party in an excellent position to argue for the removal from the World Heritage List in Danger;
- A decision for referral or deferral would have to be accompanied by concrete and updated guidance on the discrepancy between World Heritage expectations and the status quo. This would not weaken the State Party position but contribute to inform the on-going management response to meet World Heritage expectations.

In the view of the mission, there is no realistic risk of a new nomination leading to a recommendation for non-inscription. Such an outcome would be incompatible with the on-going process to remove the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger and be contradictory to the Committee's requests since Decision **35 COM 7A.9** to submit a proposal for boundary modification.

#### **Recommendation 1**

Prioritize the preparation of a Significant Boundary Modification on the understanding that it amounts to a new nomination, and use the process as a coherent framework to structure and coordinate the implementation of actions towards meeting the Desired State of Conservation for the Removal of the Property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR), and other Committee requests with immediate effect.

#### **Recommendation 2**

Initiate the evaluation of the current 2009-2019 General Management Plan (GMP) to inform the next GMP, and extend the geographical scope to include the expanded Simien Mountains National Park (SMNP) boundaries as soon as possible to discuss and structure future management, taking advantage of the exercise to inform the new nomination of SMNP and vice-versa.

The above recommendations to focus on two complementary and mutually reinforcing exercises can and should consistently incorporate all thematic areas. The following list provides an overview of all individual technical recommendations to the State Party offered in chapter 3. All recommendations are explained in detail in the corresponding sub-chapters.

#### **Recommendation 3**

Consolidate the participation of local communities in the management and eventually the governance (decision-making) of the property and SMNP.

#### **Recommendation 4**

Ensure clear and agreed communication, coordination and cooperation mechanisms between the management authority of SMNP and international institutions operating at SMNP to maximize the coherence and effectiveness of external support and advice.

#### **Recommendation 5**

Build on the existing Grazing Pressure Reduction Strategy to consolidate and refine realistic and effective guidance on livestock grazing in the property and the larger SMNP, including by investing in a better understanding of the consequences of reducing grazing for local communities, entering into user agreements and establishing conflict management mechanisms.

#### **Recommendation 6**

Establish negotiated user agreements with local communities defining both rights and responsibilities associated with natural resource use.

#### **Recommendation 7**

Ensure the continued monitoring and compliance of the Gich and Arkwazi community resettlements with all national laws and international policy and guidance.

#### **Recommendation 8**

Finalize the construction of the alternative road, which will mostly be located outside of the property and SMNP, to reduce the impacts of the main road within the property and SMNP.

#### **Recommendation 9**

Systematically incorporate management of all road infrastructures into the management of SMNP starting with the new General Management Plan (GMP), in particular as regards impact monitoring and mitigation.

**Recommendation 10**

Relocate the power transmission line from its current alignment next to the main road running through the property and SMNP, to be in line with the new alternative road in conformity to the State Party's commitment, upon completion of the alternative road currently under construction.

**Recommendation 11**

Strengthen the implementation of tourism management, building upon the comprehensive provisions of the existing GMP and other readily available guidance.

**Recommendation 12**

Re-invest in the maintenance of existing tourism infrastructure while restricting new infrastructure to outside of the property and SMNP, fully considering all environmental and social impacts.

**Recommendation 13**

Incorporate standardized and replicable monitoring of Walia Ibex, Ethiopian Wolf and Gelada as the three flagship species in routine management, including in relation to disturbance from tourism.

**Recommendation 14**

Incorporate simple and replicable climate change monitoring into routine monitoring protocols.

## 6. REFERENCES

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## 7. USEFUL LINKS

### URL active at the time of writing in alphabetical order

<http://et.chm-cbd.net/>, CBD/CHM Ethiopia, Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute

<https://fzs.org/en/projects/afroalpine-conservation/simien-mountains/>, Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS)

<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/gelada/>, University of Michigan Gelada Research Project

<http://whc.unesco.org>, UNESCO World Heritage Centre (WHC)

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/9>, UNESCO WHC information on the World Heritage property

<http://www.awf.org>, African Wildlife Foundation, see also <https://www.awf.org/landscape/simien-mountains> and <http://www.awf.org/projects/simien-mountains-cultural-tourism>

<https://www.cbd.int/countries/?country=et>, country overview under the CBD

[http://www.cepf.net/where\\_we\\_work/regions/africa/eastern\\_afromontane/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.cepf.net/where_we_work/regions/africa/eastern_afromontane/Pages/default.aspx), Eastern Afromontane Biodiversity Hotspot, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)

<http://www.ethiopianwolf.org>, Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme (EWCP), WildCRU (University of Oxford) under agreement with Ethiopia's Wildlife Conservation Authority and Regional Governments, cooperating with the IUCN Canid Specialist Group

<http://www.ebi.gov.et/>, Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute

<http://www.eefri.org/>, Ethiopian Environment and Forest Research Institute (EEFRI)

<http://www.ewca.gov.et/>, Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority

<http://www.iucn.org/worldheritage>, IUCN World Heritage Programme

<http://www.iucnredlist.org>, The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/3797/0>, Red List information on *Capra walie*

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/3748/0>, Red List information on *Canis simensis*

<http://www.phe-ethiopia.org>, Population Health & Environment Ethiopia

<http://www.simienmountains.org>, EWCA information on Simien Mountains National Park

<http://www.zeroextinction.org/sitedata.cfm?siteid=10047>, Alliance for Zero Extinction entry triggered by *Capra walie*

<http://www.worldwildlife.org/ecoregions/at1007>, Global 200 description of the “Ethiopian montane Grasslands and Woodlands” ecoregion

## 8. ANNEXES

### Annex 1: World Heritage Committee Decision 40 COM 7A.43 (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016)

#### Simien National Park (Ethiopia) (N 9)

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/16/40.COM/7A,
2. Recalling Decision **39 COM 7A.10**, adopted at its 39th session (Bonn, 2015),
3. Takes note that the on-going voluntary relocation of the Gich community is nearing completion, and requests the State Party to ensure that the remaining compensations and housing constructions are fully completed, and the implementation of the strategies for alternative livelihoods are continued;
4. Welcomes the funding provided by different donors to support the development of alternative livelihood opportunities for the people living in the immediate vicinity of the park, and calls on further donors to support these initiatives to ensure their sustainability in the long term;
5. Notes with appreciation the completion of the grazing pressure reduction strategy through stakeholder engagement and the timely initiation of its implementation, and also requests the State Party to secure investments and keep the World Heritage Centre updated on progress with the strategy's implementation;
6. Notes that a recent study found an increase in Walia ibex and Ethiopian wolf populations, and encourages the State Party to apply for International Assistance to commission a more detailed independent study in line with Committee Decision **39 COM 7A.10**;
7. Also notes that a gate has been constructed at Sawrie to restrict and monitor road use and further requests the State Party to accelerate the delayed realignment of roads crossing the property to reduce the pressure on the existing road through the property and to submit a map with all existing and proposed roads;
8. Requests furthermore the State Party to clarify the location of the proposed eco-lodge developments inside the park, and to ensure that the relevant Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) include a thorough assessment of the potential impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property in line with IUCN's World Heritage Advice Note on Environmental Assessment, and to submit the report to the World Heritage Centre for review before any decisions are made, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;
9. Reiterates its request to the State Party to submit a proposal for the modification of the property's boundaries through the preparation of a new nomination, as per Decision **35 COM 7A.9**, in order to harmonize the boundaries of the property with the new boundaries of the national park;
10. Requests moreover the State Party to invite an IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property, in order to assess progress in the implementation of the corrective measures and towards meeting the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR);
11. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2017, 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 41<sup>st</sup> session in 2017;
12. **Decides to retain Simien National Park (Ethiopia) on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**

## Annex 2: Terms of Reference of the IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission

At its 40<sup>th</sup> session in Istanbul (July 2016), the World Heritage Committee requested the State Party of Ethiopia to invite an IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to Simien National Park “in order to assess progress in the implementation of the corrective measures and towards meeting the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR)” (Decision **40 COM 7A.43**). IUCN will be represented by Mr Tilman Jaeger.

The mission will carry out the following tasks:

1. Assess progress made by the State Party and its partners in the implementation of the corrective measures and towards meeting the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) as adopted by the Committee in its Decision **34 COM 7A.9**, in particular progress in resolving the following issues:
  - a. gazetting of the new park boundary into national law;
  - b. reducing the impacts of the livestock grazing within the property;
  - c. provision of alternative livelihoods, and other efforts to reconcile conservation and livelihood needs within the property.
2. In line with paragraph 173 of the *Operational Guidelines*, assess any other relevant conservation issues (including the proposed eco-lodges) that may impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including the conditions of integrity and protection and management;
3. If the mission concludes that the DSOCR has not been met, update the corrective measures, including a time frame for their implementation.

The State Party will facilitate necessary field visits to key locations to be able to assess progress with the implementation of the corrective measures and towards achieving each indicator of the DSOCR, and the locations of the proposed eco-lodges. The mission should hold consultations with the Ethiopian authorities at national, regional and local levels, including representatives of the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA). In addition, the mission should hold consultations with a range of relevant stakeholders, including: i) NGOs (in particular the African Wildlife Foundation-AWF) and other organizations supporting the management of the property; ii) representatives of the tourism sector; iii) representatives of local communities, including in particular the Gich community; iv) representatives of the bi-lateral and multi-lateral cooperation partners supporting the management of the property, such as the German Development Bank (KfW), the Austrian Development Cooperation and the UNDP GEF Small Grants Programme; and v) relevant scientists, researchers and experts.

In order to ensure adequate preparation of the mission, the State Party should provide the following items to the World Heritage Centre (copied to IUCN) as soon as possible and preferably no later than one month before the mission:

- a. the most recent version of the management plan for the property;
- b. key documents related to the voluntary relocation of the Gich community, including the independent study supported by KfW and the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP);
- c. the results of the most recent surveys of key species and their population trends, including Walia ibex and Ethiopian wolf;
- d. details on the existing and proposed roads within and in immediate vicinity to the property, including a map of their locations;
- e. details on the existing and proposed tourism developments within the property, including a map of their locations and copies of the Environmental Impact

Assessments (EIAs) on the proposed eco-lodge developments inside the park if already available;

Please note that additional information may be requested from the State Party and key stakeholders during the mission.

Based on the assessment of available information and discussions with the State Party representatives and stakeholders, the mission will develop recommendations to the World Heritage Committee regarding the status of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger and provide guidance to the State Party on further recommended actions that will ensure conservation of the property's Outstanding Universal Value and conditions of integrity beyond the achievement of the DSOCR. It should be noted that recommendations are made within the mission report (see below), and not during the course of the mission.

The mission will prepare a report on the findings and recommendations of this Reactive Monitoring mission no later than 6 weeks after the completion of the mission, following the standard format, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 41st session.

### Annex 3: Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value of SMNP

#### Brief synthesis

Simien National Park, in northern Ethiopia is a spectacular landscape, where massive erosion over millions of years has created jagged mountain peaks, deep valleys and sharp precipices dropping some 1,500 m. The park is of global significance for biodiversity conservation because it is home to globally threatened species, including the iconic Walia ibex, a wild mountain goat found nowhere else in the world, the Gelada baboon and the Ethiopian wolf.

#### Criterion (vii)

The property's spectacular landscape is part of the Simien mountain massif, which is located on the northern limit of the main Ethiopian plateau and includes the highest point in Ethiopia, Ras Dejen. The undulating plateau of the Simien mountains has over millions of years been eroded to form precipitous cliffs and deep gorges of exceptional natural beauty. Some cliffs reach 1,500 m in height and the northern cliff wall extends for some 35 km. The mountains are bounded by deep valleys to the north, east and south, and offer vast vistas over the rugged-canyon like lowlands below. The spectacular scenery of the Simien Mountains is considered to rival Colorado's Grand Canyon.

#### Criterion (x)

The property is of global significance for biodiversity conservation. It forms part of the Afroalpine Centre of Plant Diversity and the Eastern Afromontane biodiversity hotspot, and it is home to a number of globally threatened species. The cliff areas of the park are the main habitat of the Endangered Walia ibex (*Capra walie*), a wild mountain goat which is endemic to the Simien Mountains. Other flagship species include the Endangered Ethiopian wolf (or Simien fox, *Canis simensis*), considered to be the rarest canid species in the world and the Gelada baboon (*Theropithecus gelada*), both of which are endemic to the Ethiopian Highlands and depend on Afroalpine grasslands and heathlands. Other large mammal species include the Anubis baboon, Hamadryas baboon, klipspringer, and golden jackal. The park is also an Important Bird Area that forms part of the larger Endemic Bird Area of the Central Ethiopian Highlands. In total, over 20 large mammal species and over 130 bird species occur in the park. The mountains are home to 5 small mammal species and 16 bird species endemic to Eritrea and/or Ethiopia as well as an important population of the rare lammergeyer (*Gypaetus barbatus*), a spectacular vulture species. The park's richness in species and habitats is a result of its great altitudinal, topographic and climatic diversity, which have shaped its Afromontane and Afroalpine ecosystems.

#### Integrity

The property was established in an area inhabited by humans and, at the time of inscription, 80% of the park was under human use of one form or another. Threats to the integrity of the park include human settlement, cultivation and soil erosion, particularly around the village of Gich; frequent fires in the tree heather forest; and excessive numbers of domestic stock. Agricultural and pastoral activities, including both cultivation of a significant area of the property and grazing of a large population of animals in particular have severely affected the natural values of the property, including the critical habitats of the Walia ibex and Ethiopian wolf. The boundaries of the property include key areas essential for maintaining the scenic values of the property. However, they do not encompass all the areas necessary to maintain and enhance the populations of the Walia ibex and Ethiopian wolf, and a proposal to revise and extend the park boundaries was put forward in the original nomination. Whilst human settlements threaten the integrity of the originally inscribed property, two proposed extensions of the national park (the Masarerya and the Limalimo Wildlife Reserves, and also the Ras Dejen mountain and Silki-Kidis Yared sectors) and their interlinking corridors are free of human settlement and cultivation, and support the key species that are central parts of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. Several assessments have considered that an extension of the property to match extended boundaries of the National Park, which to include

areas with negligible human population are an essential requirement to maintain its Outstanding Universal Value.

### **Protection and management requirements**

The national park was established in 1969 and is recognised and protected under national protected areas legislation. The property requires an effective management presence and the maintenance and increasing of staff levels and training. Key tasks for the management of the park include the effective protection of the park's flagship species and close cooperation with local communities in order to reduce the pressure on the park's resources arising from agricultural expansion, livestock overstocking and overharvesting of natural resources. The pressures on the property are likely to increase further as a result of global climate change.

Significant financial support is needed for the management of the park, and the development of alternative livelihood options for local communities. The development, implementation, review and monitoring of a management plan and the revision and extension of the park boundaries, with the full participation of local communities, is essential. Community partnership is particularly important to both reduce community dependence on unsustainable use of the resources of the national park, and also to develop sustainable livelihoods. Adequate finance to support resettlement of populations living in the property, on a fully voluntary basis, and to introduce effective management of grazing is also essential to reduce the extreme pressure on wildlife. Improving and increasing ecotourism facilities, without impairing the park's natural and scenic values, has great potential to create additional revenue for the property. Environmental education and training programmes are also needed to support communities in and around the property as well as to maintain community support and partnership in the management of the property in order to ensure it remains of Outstanding Universal Value.

## **Annex 4: Mission Agenda as conducted**

### **Sunday, 23 April 2017, PM**

Arrival of IUCN representative in Addis Ababa and welcome by Dawud Mume Ali and Girma Timer

### **Monday, 24 April 2017, meetings in Addis Ababa**

#### **AM**

Dawud Mume Ali, outgoing Director General, EWCA  
 Dr. Fanuel Kebede, Advisor to Director General, EWCA  
 Girma Timer, Director, Wildlife Development and Protection Directorate, EWCA  
 Samuel Seyoum Demeke, Director, Planning and Programming Directorate, EWCA  
 Kahsay Gebretensae, Director, Research and Monitoring, EWCA  
 Daniel Pawlos, Director, Wildlife and their Products Trafficking Control, EWCA  
 Yonas Desta Tsegaye, Director General, ARCCCH  
 Tsehay Eshete, Director of immovable Heritage development Directorate, ARCCCH  
 Getu Assefa, National Officer for Culture, UNESCO Addis Ababa

#### **PM**

H.E Dr. Hirut Weldemariam, Minister, Ministry of Culture and Tourism

### **Tuesday, 25 April 2017, meetings in Addis Ababa and air travel to Bahir Dar**

Girma Timer, Director, Wildlife Development and Protection Directorate, EWCA  
 Getu Assefa, National Officer for Culture, UNESCO Addis Ababa  
 Dr. Lakew Berhanu, Deputy Program Manager, Biodiversity and Forestry Program, GIZ  
 Girma Workie, Monitoring and Evaluation Analyst, UNDP/UN Resident Coordinator's Office  
 Zeleke Tigabe Abuhay, SMNP Project Manager, AWF  
 Arega Mekonnen, former Coordinator, Sustainable Development of Protected Area System in Ethiopia (SDPASE), GIZ  
 Dereje Kebede, Austrian Development Cooperation Programme Manager, Rural Development and Endashawu Moges, Coordinator, Monitoring, Evaluation and Communication, PHE-Ethiopia Consortium  
 Hailelul Negash, Head, Finance and Administration, PHE-Ethiopia Consortium:

### **Wednesday, 26 April 2017 meetings in Bahir Dar and Gondar**

#### **A.M. (Bahir Dar)**

H.E. Gedu Andargachew, President, Amhara National Regional State (ANRS)  
 Belsti Fetene, Director, Wildlife Conservation Directorate, ANRS Forest, Environment and Wildlife Conservation Authority  
 Ayenew Gebeyehu, Wildlife Expert, ANRS Forest, Environment and Wildlife Conservation Authority  
 Melaku Birhane, Director, Planning and Programming Directorate, ANRS Culture and Tourism Bureau

#### **PM (Gondar)**

Seide Jemaw, Advisor, North Gondar Zone Administration  
 Teshome Mulu, Coordinator, North Gondar, Livelihood Improvements and Sustainable Natural Resource Management, ADA  
 Mulu Silute, Process Owner, Environmental Protection, Land Administration and Use Department  
 Behulu Anteneh, Deputy Process Owner, North Gondar Zone Department of Agriculture

### **Thursday, 27 April 2017, travel to Debark, PM**

Maru Biadgign, Chief Warden SMNP and staff  
 Abebawu Azanawu, Research, Protection and Monitoring Warden, SMNP  
 Tadesse Yigzawu, Tourism and Community Partnership Warden, SMNP  
 Belayineh Abebe, Wildlife and Research Monitoring Expert, SMNP  
 Girma Timer, Director, Wildlife Development and Protection Directorate, EWCA  
 Nure Mohamed, Representative, Gich Community  
 Usman Adem, Representative, Gich Community  
 Rejawu Abidrahman, Representative, Gich Community  
 Yonus Mohamed, Representative, Gich Community  
 Jemal Zewde, Representative, Gich Community  
 W/ro Debework Yigzawu, Chief Administrator of Debark Wereda  
 Hilegergis Mulugeta, Town Mayor, Debark

Belete Tilaye, former Chief Administrator, Debark Wereda, now Manager, Debark Town Municipality Office

Gashawu Tekeba, Head, Debark Wereda Small Scale Enterprise Office

Tarekegn Belayneh, Head, Debark Wereda Culture and Tourism Bureau

Solomon Worku, Head, Debark Woreda Environmental Protection and Land Use Administration

Zelege Tigabe Abuhay, SMNP Project Manager, AWF

Brief visit of local community on the newly resettlement site at debark

Meeting with Julia Jeans and Melese Yemata, co-owners of Limalimo Lodge

#### **Friday, 28 April 2017, SMNP**

Park visit with Chief Warden and staff of SMNP and representatives of EWCA HQ and AWF

#### **Saturday, 29 April 2017, SMNP**

Park visit with Chief Warden and staff of SMNP and representatives of EWCA HQ and AWF, including hike to former location of re-settled Gich community

#### **Sunday, 30 April 2017, Gondar, flight to Addis Ababa, debriefing at EWCA**

##### **AM (Gondar)**

Professor Hans Hurni

##### **PM (Addis Ababa)**

EWCA debriefing

Dawud Mume Ali, outgoing DG, EWCA

Kumara Wakjira, incoming DG (former Director of National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries Directorate), EWCA

Girma Timer, Director, Wildlife Development and Protection Directorate, EWCA

Selhadin Muktar, Director, Human Resource Development and Administration Directorate

Rezenom Almaw, Director, Community Partnership and Wildlife Education Directorate

Samuel Seyoum Demeke, Director, Planning and Programming Directorate, EWCA

Hailay G/Her, Director Wildlife Utilization

Getu Assefa, National Officer for Culture, UNESCO Addis Ababa

End of mission and departure of IUCN representative

#### **Annex 5: Additional colleagues consulted**

In addition to the above-listed people met during the mission selected colleagues were consulted before and/or after the mission. All are listed hereafter in alphabetical order unless they wished to remain anonymous.

Andrea Athanas, AWF

Bastian Bertzky, IUCN Representative 2006 RMM

Guy Debonnet, WHC Representative 2006 RMM

Dr. Peter Howard, IUCN Representative 2009 RMM

Susanna Kari, WHC

Dr. Karen Laurenson, FZS

Richard Lo Giudice, WHC

Dr. Jorgelina Marino, EWCP / Oxford University

Guy Palmer, Cape Nature

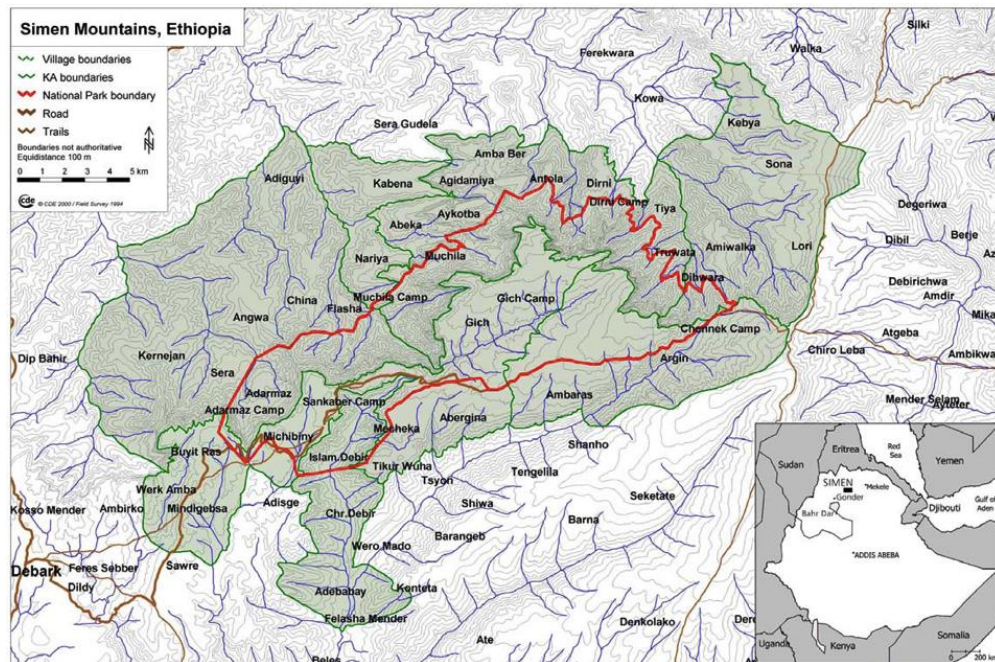
Alistair Pole, AWF

Dr. Ludwig Siege, former GIZ

Thomas H. Wolf, KfW

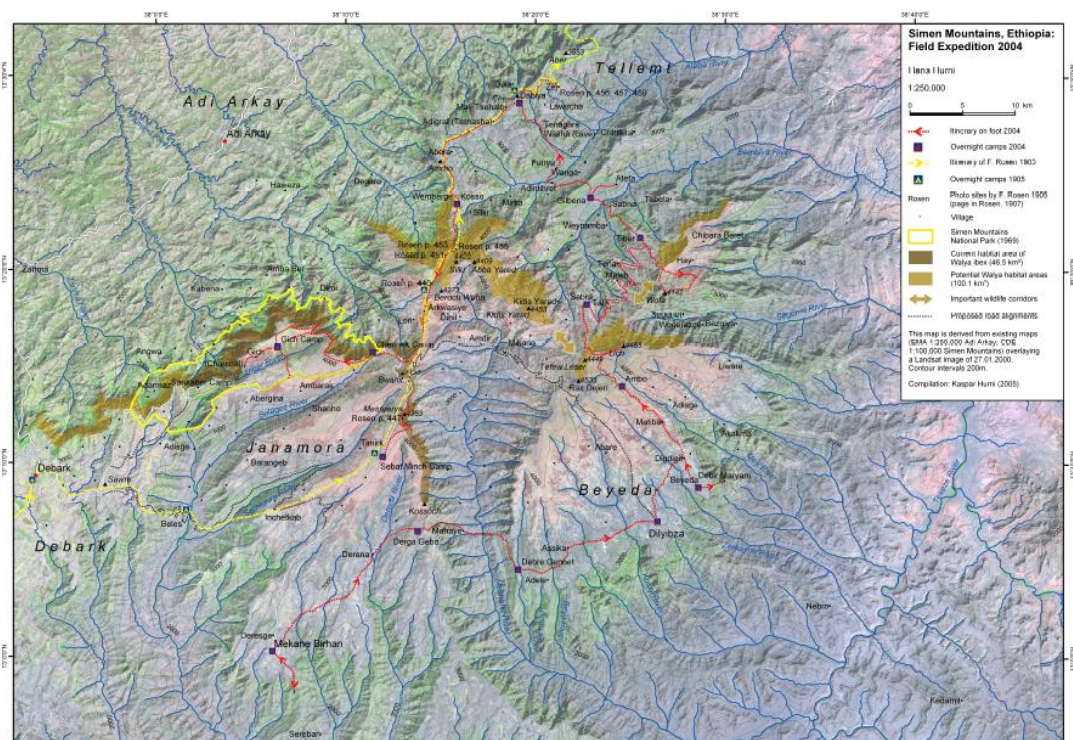
## Annex 6: Selected Maps

**Map 1: Overview Map of Simien National Park as inscribed in 1978**



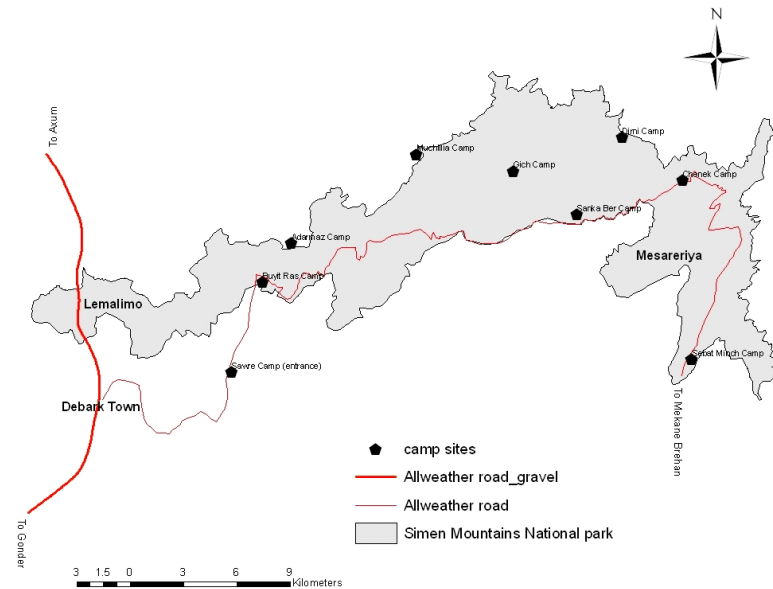
Original national park boundary in red, which still remains the Simien National Park World Heritage property boundary. The inset on the bottom right indicates the property's location within Ethiopia. **Source:** Centre for Development and Environment, University of Berne (2000). In: Debonnet et al. (2006).

**Map 2: Simien National Park as inscribed in 1978 within the broader Simien Mountains**



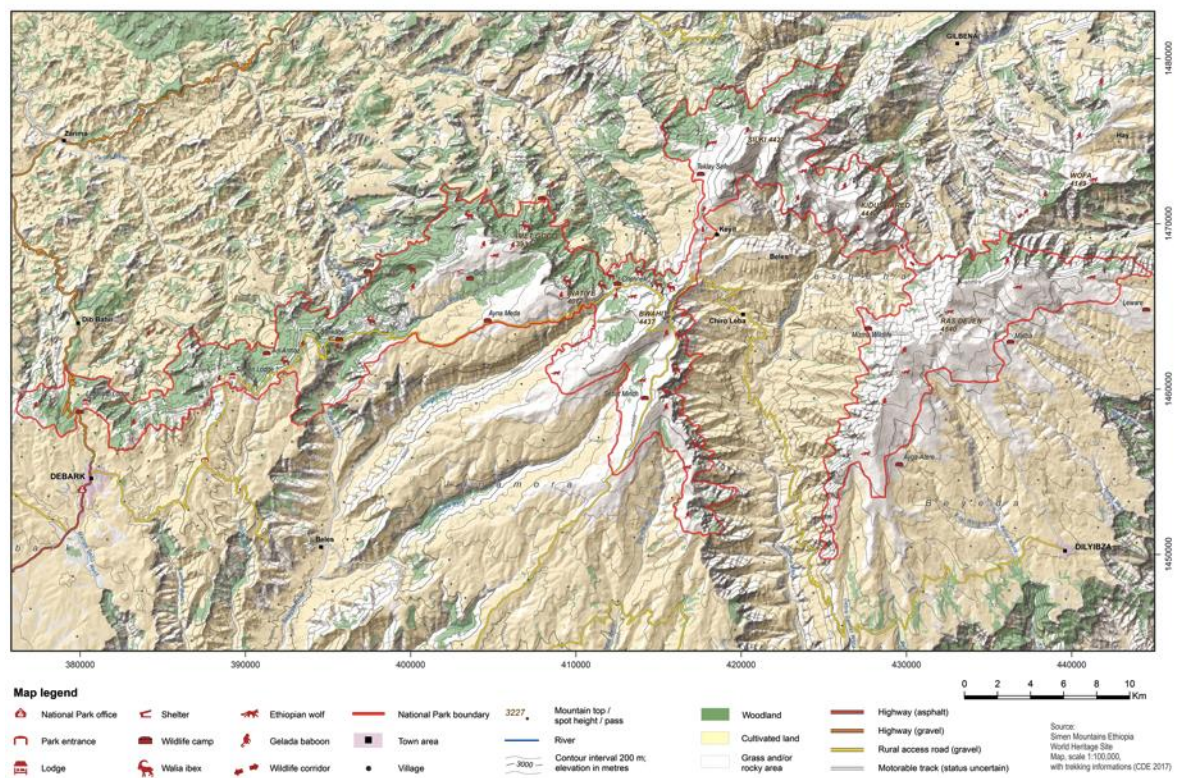
The same original surface area of the national park in yellow colour while also visualizing the nearby mountain topography, in particular to the east. The light brown colour outside of the national park indicates potential ibex habitat. The red line indicates the itinerary of an expedition, which played a role in the eventual re-configuration of the national park boundaries. **Source:** Hurni (2005).

**Map 3: Revised boundaries of Simien Mountains National Park**



A rough indication of the revised boundaries of the Simien Mountains National Park following alignment excluding the villages along the boundary and the inclusion of Mesareriya and Lemalimo Wildlife Reserves. **Source:** Parks Development and Protection Authority of Amhara Region (2006). In: Debonnet et al. (2006).

**Map 4: Boundaries of the National Park as gazetted in 2015**



The current boundary configuration of Simien Mountains National Park in red colour as gazetted in 2015. **Source:** Centre for Development and Environment, University of Berne (2017).



## Annex 7: Photographic Documentation



**Photograph 1:** Afro-alpine grassland at around 3,700 m.a.s.l. with Giant Lobelia (*Lobelia rhynchoptalum*) in the foreground and open Tree Heath (*Erica arborea*) forest on the opposite slope. ©IUCN/Tilman Jaeger



**Photograph 2:** The dramatic escarpment within the national park separates parts of the Ethiopian Highlands exceeding 4,000 m.a.s.l. from lower elevations. The steepness and ruggedness of the landscape is not only one of the reasons behind the ecological and biological wealth but ensures a high degree of natural protection. ©IUCN/Tilman Jaeger



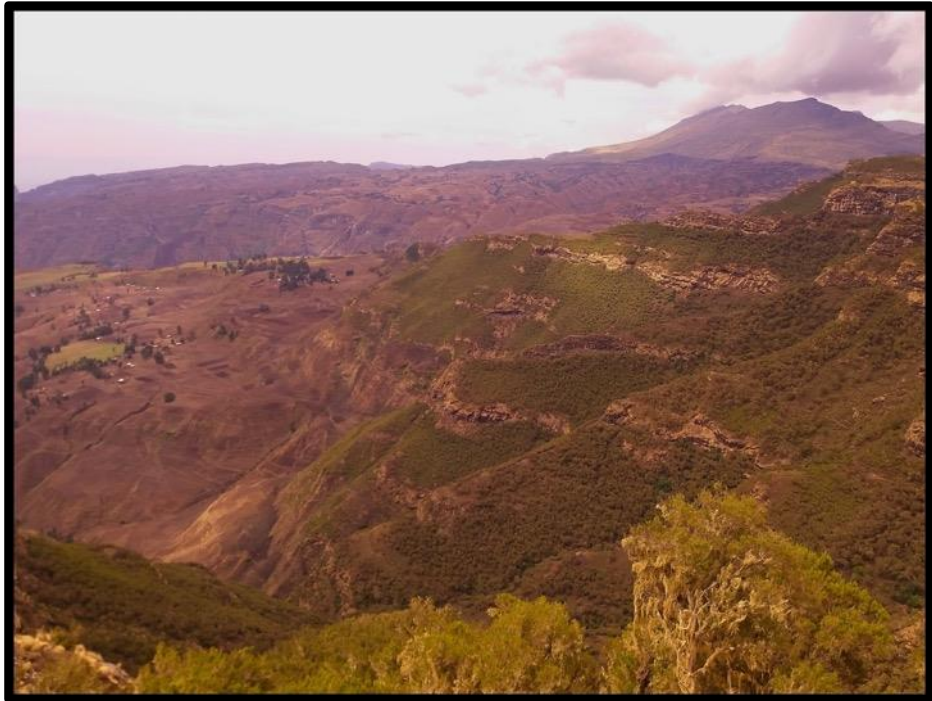
**Photograph 3:** A group of Geladas (*Theropithecus gelada*) moving through a Tree Heath (*Erica arborea*) forest. ©IUCN/Tilman Jaeger



**Photograph 4:** A male Walia Ibex (*Capra walie*) at dusk close to a road intersecting Simien Mountains National Park. The endangered species is endemic to the Simien Mountains and one of the flagships of the national park and World Heritage property. ©IUCN/Tilman Jaeger



**Photograph 5:** Open Tree Heath (*Erica arborea*) forest within the national park in a previously grazed area. Ethiopia is home to one of several disjunct populations of the species in Africa. ©IUCN/Tilman Jaeger



**Photograph 6:** A fairly typical view of the boundary of the national park. Accessible land is typically cultivated wherever possible. In this case, the fields border regenerating remnants of montane forests. ©IUCN/Tilman Jaeger



**Photograph 7:** The village of Gich within the national park was recently re-settled to the outskirts of the nearby town of Debark. ©IUCN/Tilman Jaeger



**Photograph 8:** The residents of the former village of Gich today live in the outskirts of the town of Debark. ©IUCN/Tilman Jaeger