



# World Heritage and Environmental Assessments

An IUCN perspective

Remco van Merm, Conservation Officer, IUCN World Heritage Programme  
remco.vanmerm@iucn.org

[http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/wcpa\\_worldheritage/policies/env\\_assessment/](http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/wcpa_worldheritage/policies/env_assessment/)



## Environmental Assessment - Overview

- Identify, evaluate, avoid and mitigate;
- Before taking a decision;
- Assess alternatives, incl. 'no project' option

### Benefits:

- Early consideration of environmental and social issues;
- Greater certainty about future development;
- Local communities' participation;
- Better environmental and social outcomes;
- Address cumulative impacts.



# Environmental Assessment – Overview

Types of Environmental Assessment:

- Environmental (and Social) Impact Assessment – E(S)IA:
  - Individual projects → less suited for cumulative impacts or ‘strategic’ alternatives
  - EIA Directive (EU) and Espoo Convention (international)
  - Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA):
  - Policies, plans and programmes (i.e. multiple or very large projects)
  - Assess (cumulative) impacts on landscape and regional scale
  - Identify economically viable alternatives
  - SEA Directive (EU) and SEA Protocol (international)

Other types exist (eg. *Appropriate Assessments (AA)* under the Natura 2000 framework) → largely similar in purpose and scope to either EIA or SEA



# World Heritage and Environmental Assessment

Paragraph 172, *Operational Guidelines* → submit relevant documentation, eg. EIA

Integration of natural World Heritage sites in Environmental Assessments may be complicated by:

- Limited resources and staff capacity;
- Barriers to communication across government agencies;
- Unclear processes for issuing development permits;
- Limited stakeholder consultation processes;
- Lack of information about World Heritage sites and procedures

Integrating World Heritage sites is critical to:

- equip decision-makers with the information necessary to preserve World Heritage sites for future generations
- ensure consideration of potential adverse impacts on a site's ***Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)***, including values, integrity and protection and management;
- recognize that natural World Heritage sites cannot be considered separately from the wider ecosystem.



# World Heritage and Environmental Assessment

IUCN's position:

*“...infrastructure and other development proposals and/or concessions located within, or outside the boundaries of a natural World Heritage Site, should be considered in terms of whether they are compatible with the long-term objective of preserving the Outstanding Universal Value of the site for future generations. **Those proposals that are not compatible with this objective should not be permitted within these sites.**”*

- No-go principle: extractives and dams with large reservoirs
- Rigorous Environmental Assessment
  - Consultation with International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) members to develop IUCN Advice Note
  - 8 World Heritage Impact Assessment Principles
  - Identify reasonable alternatives, including ‘no project’ option



# World Heritage Impact Assessment Principles

- **Principle 1:** Undertake rigorous Environmental Assessment early in the decision-making process
- **Principle 2:** Closely involve experts with World Heritage, protected area and biodiversity knowledge
- **Principle 3:** Assess environmental and societal impacts on Outstanding Universal Value, including direct, indirect and cumulative effects
- **Principle 4:** Identify and assess alternatives in order to recommend the most sustainable option to decision-makers



# World Heritage Impact Assessment Principles

- **Principle 5:** Identify mitigation measures in line with the mitigation hierarchy
- **Principle 6:** Include a separate chapter on World Heritage
- **Principle 7:** Thorough public consultation at different stages, and public disclosure of assessment
- **Principle 8:** Propose and implement environmental management plan, subject to independent audit

Step-by-step guidance on application of Principles in annexes to IUCN Advice Note



## IUCN's review process

- Documents (eg. EIA) received from SP by WH Centre → transmitted to IUCN;
- IUCN evaluates whether the 8 World Heritage Impact Assessment Principles are met;
- IUCN consults network of experts (WCPA, SSC, etc);
- IUCN's brief technical comments transmitted to SP, through WH Centre;
- IUCN's review incorporated in SOC reports;
- If no separate chapter on World Heritage → assessment inadequate

Independent review can be commissioned through IUCN's network (please contact [whconservation@iucn.org](mailto:whconservation@iucn.org)) → does not constitute IUCN's official position



## Issues and next steps

### Issues:

- Inconsistent application of Paragraph 172 OG → late submission of information;
- Lack of awareness of World Heritage requirements;
- Legal implications.

### Next steps:

- States Parties to inform WH Committee of proposed developments at an early stage;
- Improve communication between different government agencies;
- Register and identify all natural World Heritage Sites in land-use planning information systems;
- Review of legal provisions to facilitate integration of WH in Environmental Assessment



## Case study: Rwenzori Mountains National Park (Uganda)

Kakaka Small Hydropower project, located 400 m inside property boundary on River Rwimi

- Original EIA:
  - Number of WH Impact Assessment Principles not met;
  - No specific assessment of impacts on OUV;
- Updated EIA:
  - Including an assessment of impacts on OUV;
  - Potential impacts on OUV assessed as medium to large negative, even after mitigation;
- Conclusion: proposed development not compatible with conservation of OUV



## Case study: Niokolo-Koba National Park (Senegal)

Mako Gold Mining Project, located 1 km outside property boundaries:

- Original EIA;
  - Meets WH Impact Assessment Principles;
  - Separate chapter on WH summarises relevant findings from detailed assessments (biological impacts, physical impacts, etc)
  - Lack of understanding re severity of impacts: Chimpanzees → precautionary principle;
- EIA went beyond legal requirements in Senegal, which do not include provisions for assessment of impacts on OUV



## Case study: Te Wahipounamu – South West New Zealand (New Zealand)

Two proposals: Fiordland Link Experience (mono rail) and Milford Dart Tunnel

- Original EIAs (2012): no assessment of impacts on OUV;
- Additional assessments of impacts on OUV undertaken;
- Result:
  - Milford Dart Tunnel rejected in July 2013
  - Fiordland Link Experience rejected in May 2014