THE SUBMISSION OF
STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT
BY THE STATE PARTY

(in compliance with Paragraph 169 of the Operational Guidelines)

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

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

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

Identification number:
98bis

1. Executive Summary of the report

Plitvice Lakes is the oldest and largest national park in the Republic of Croatia. Plitvice Lakes are protected according to three criteria of outstanding universal value (OUV), namely VII, VIII and IX and on 26 October 1979 were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The property is managed by the Public Institution Plitvice Lakes National Park (PIPLNP) and the main management documents are the Management Plan of the Plitvice Lakes National Park and the Spatial Plan of the area with special features for Plitvice Lakes National Park (hereinafter: Spatial Plan).

While the ecological integrity of the property has so far been preserved, recently, certain threats that might affect OUV of the property were observed. The majority of threats stem from the Spatial Plan adopted by the Croatian Parliament in 2014, an excessive number of visitors and the associated pressures (water use, water pollution, road infrastructure, etc.), further to which the UNESCO World Heritage Centre requested a State of Conservation reports.

In response to the requests and Decisions of the UNESCO Committee, the Republic of Croatia organized a Reactive Monitoring mission and submitted a State of Conservation reports on the implementation of the recommendations and the Action Plan for improvement of the conservation status of the Plitvice Lakes National Park (PLNP). The Action Plan addresses the following issues: expansion of the tourist facilities and visitor numbers in the National Park, restoration of the water supply and drainage system and cooperation with local stakeholders. Besides these issues, the Action Plan also outlines the measures and the deadlines for implementation of activities and the institutions responsible for certain activities. In April 2017, an Operational Working Group (OWG) was established, with the aim of coordinating the implementation of Action Plan recommendations.
According to the Action Plan, following measures are undertaken:
The key measure for the mitigation of a number of issues related to negative impacts of tourist facilities, was to amend the Spatial Plan with the aim of introducing additional restrictions for the construction of tourism infrastructure, and thus the drafting of relevant and necessary studies (nature expert baseline study, assessment of potential impact on the Outstanding Universal Values, etc.) was initiated together with a decision to amend the Spatial Plan.

In July 2017, the Ministry of Construction and Physical Planning (MCPP) and the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MEE) have sent to the regional administrative departments in Karlovac County and Lika-Senj County, responsible for issuing building permits, additional clarifications regarding implementation of procedures and drafting of acts by which construction is permitted based on the Spatial Plan. As a result of the clarifications, the number of issued building permits for tourist facilities has been significantly reduced.

In addition, according to the amendment to the Nature Protection Act, which entered into force on 22 February 2018, the PIPLNP will be involved in the process of issuing building permits by issuing the nature protection requirements.

Regarding the new Management Plan, which includes the Visitor Management Plan as one of its key components, PIPLNP is working intensively on its development. First draft is expected to be completed and delivered to WHC UNESCO in March 2018.

Regarding inspectional supervision, by the end of 2017, the Building Inspection and Nature Protection Inspection carried out supervision of suspected illegally built facilities and “simple constructions”, and Water Inspection carried out supervision of water conditions for suspected subjects. The removal of the illegally built facilities and other objects was requested, while for some facilities the compliance with building permits was ordered.

Concerning the request to the State Party to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Spatial Plan, the State Party will undertake SEA through the procedure of amendment to the Spatial Plan along with the appropriate assessment of the impact of the Plan on the ecological network and assessment of potential impact on the Outstanding Universal Values not only for the amendments but also for the entire Plan.

Unsustainable water use and water pollution will be resolved through a project developed by Croatian Waters and two local municipalities. The project aims to restore and reconstruct water structures within the PLNP, including collection and treatment of wastewater within two municipalities, reconstruction of the water supply network and relocation of the water supply outside the property by 2023. Through this project key issues related to water use and pollution will be resolved.

Since the time foreseen for project implementation is four years, OWG initiated the following emergency measures: installation of a mobile wastewater treatment plant for the current major sewage system in June 2018 and restoration of the key water supply line which is in progress.

The local community is actively involved in the drafting of the Management Plan and the PIPLNP is developing a sustainable system, using green public procurement methods, in order to ensure that local products are offered to the catering facilities in the park with the aim of encouraging development of local products.

Regarding global warming as a potential threat to OUV, PIPLNP will ensure regular monitoring of the temperature, aquatic habitats and their wildlife. The Croatian Institute of Public Health carries out water analyses four times a year while the laboratory in PIPLNP carries them out on a monthly basis.

The current Spatial Plan foresees the relocation of the state road outside the borders of the park. MEE and the Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure opened discussion in October 2017 concerning this topic and the procedure for developing the designs and obtaining the permits has been initiated.

A number of measures aimed at mitigation of the threats to the PLNP were already undertaken, accompanied by strong institutional and scientific support.
Accordingly, the State Party is fully committed to the implementation of the given measures in order to preserve the OUV of the PLNP.

ASSISTANT MINISTER

Igor Kreitmeyer