EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State Party:

Georgia

State, Province or Region:

Adjara Autonomous Republic, Guria and Samegrelo - Zemo Svaneti Regions

Name of Property:

Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands

Geographical coordinates of nominated component areas and regions:

No.	Name	Region	GuCentral coordinates
1	Kintrishi-Mtirala	Adjara	N 41.70228° E 41.95120°
2	Ispani	Adjara	N 41.86202° E 41.80153°
3	Grigoleti	Guria	N 42.05327° E 41.73878°
4	Imnati	Guria	N 42.10997° E 41.78880°
5	Pitshora	Samegrelo – Zemo Svaneti	N 42.15760° E 41.81514°
6	Nabada	Samegrelo – Zemo Svaneti	N 42.23466° E 41.68787°
7	Churia	Samegrelo – Zemo Svaneti	N 42.29947° E 41.66229°

TEXTUAL DESCRIPTION OF THE BOUNDARIES OF THE NOMINATED PROPERTY

This serial property consists of seven nominated component areas, which are located within Adjara Autonomous Republic, Guria Region and Samegrelo - Zemo Svaneti Region in western Georgia. The nominated component areas stretch for about 80 km along the coast of the Black Sea from north to south, with the maximum distance from the sea of about 27 km at the eastern boundary of the Kintrishi nominated component area. They are situated within five protected areas (PAs), i.e., Mtirala National Park, Kintrishi Strict Nature Reserve, a small part of Kintrishi Protected Landscape, Kobuleti Strict Nature Reserve and Kolkheti National Park. The boundaries of the buffer zones – where they exist – mostly coincide with those of the Traditional Use Zones of Mtirala National Park and Kolkheti National Park, with parts of Kintrishi Protected Landscape and Kobuleti Managed Reserve.

Boundary of nominated component area No. 1: Mtirala-Kintrishi

The Mtirala-Kintrishi nominated component area is located in the mountains to the east of the Black Sea coast between the city of Batumi and the town of Kobuleti. Its boundary follows the borders of the Strict Protection Zone (SPZ) and Visitor Zone of Mtirala National Park in the southwest as well as the borders of the

adjacent Kintrishi State Nature Reserve (SNR) in the northeast, with the following exceptions: The southernmost part of the Visitor Zone of Mtirala National Park northwest of Mount Didi Mtirala is excluded from the nominated component area and forms part of the buffer zone. The border runs from the Korolistskali River to the Meshketi Ridge. The same is true for a part of Mtirala National Park's Visitor Zone 6 km east of the village of Chakvistavi, and southwest of Murvili Mountain (where the border runs from the 960 m mark at the Murvili River and follows the south-east of its valley), two isolated patches of the park's visitor zone to the north and west of Mtsire Mtirala Mountain, for an area of subalpine meadows at the south-eastern border of Kintrishi SNR to the south of Tbikeli Mountain, and for some of the lower parts of Kintrishi SNR inside Kintrishi Valley. In addition, a 200 m stripe of Visitor Zone to the south and east of Chakvistavi has been excluded from the nominated component area. Small corridors of Kintrishi Protected Landscape along the trail connecting the lower main valley to Kheknara Mountain and connecting the southern and northern parts of Kintrishi SNR in the upper Kintrishi Valley are also part of this nominated component area. The boundaries of the buffer zone of this nominated component area – where present – are those of the Traditional Use Zone of Mtirala National Park, of Kintrishi Protected Landscape, and of the areas excluded from this nominated component area as described above.

Boundary of nominated component area No. 2: Ispani

Ispani nominated component area is centred upon Ispani 2 Mire about 1 km northeast of the coastal town of Kobuleti. Its boundaries follow those of Kobuleti Strict Nature Reserve (SNR), with two exceptions: The northern and north-eastern boundary of the nominated component area runs about 50 m south (inside) of the border of the Strict Nature Reserve, which is formed by the Togona River there. It excludes the extreme periphery of the mire with its shrubby vegetation, which serves as part of its buffer zone. Likewise, the easternmost part of Ispani 2 Mire, to the east of the small channel which is connected to the Togona River, is excluded from the nominated component area and included as part of the buffer zone. The southern and western boundary of the nominated component area follows the borders of Kobuleti SNR. The rest of its buffer zone follows the boundaries of Kobuleti Managed Reserve, which partly surrounds Kobuleti Strict Nature Reserve.

Boundary of nominated component area No. 3: Grigoleti

Grigoleti nominated component area encloses Grigoleti Mire in the southern part of Kolkheti National Park, ca. 1 km to the south-east of the village of Maltakva. The boundary of Grigoleti nominated component area fully coincides with that of the part of the Strict Protection Zone (SPZ) of Kolkheti National Park that has been established around Grigoleti Mire. It forms a roughly oval shape, with its longer axis orientated in the north-south direction, less than 1 km east of the Black Sea coast. The buffer zone follows the border of the Traditional Use Zone (TUZ) of this part of Kolkheti National Park.

Boundary of nominated component area No. 4: Imnati

The boundary of Imnati nominated component area mostly follows that of the part of the SPZ of Kolkheti National Park that has been established around Imnati Mire on the south-eastern bank of Lake Paliastomi, east of the city of Poti. The north-western part of the boundary runs along the bank of Lake Paliastomi to the mouth of the Pitshora River. From there, it follows the northern edge of the Imnati Mire itself eastwards for 7 km. After re-joining the border of the SPZ, it continues to follow the edge of Imnati Mire, until 3.2 km before the village of Maltakva, and then another 3 km northwards to the bank of Lake Paliastomi. The buffer zone mostly follows the borders of the Traditional Use Zones and Managed Protection Zones of this part of Kolkheti National Park, but also includes a small part of its SPZ in the north and east.

Boundary of nominated component area No. 5: Pitshora

Pitshora nominated component area encloses Pitshora Mire and surrounding Colchic lowland forests. It lies to the north of Imnati nominated component area (NCA), which is part of the Traditional Use Zone (TUZ) of Kolkheti National Park and the joint buffer zone of both NCAs. The boundary of Imnati nominated component area follows that of the part of the SPZ of Kolkheti National Park that has been established around Pitshora Mire, with a few exceptions: After following the northern bank of the Pitshora River (facing Imnati NCA) westwards to 3.5 km upstream of Paliastomi Lake, the boundary runs northwards, skirting the western edge of Pitshora Mire. One kilometre northwest of the village of Sakorkio, the boundary turns east, following that of the SPZ for 7.8 km. The easternmost part of this SPZ is excluded from the nominated component area, and is part of its buffer zone. Here, the border of the nominated component area follows the Sazgvargalu stream, which runs in a north-southerly direction until it discharges into the Pitshora River, where it also rejoins the border of the SPZ. The buffer zone, which encloses both this and Imnati nominated component area, follows the borders of the Traditional Use Zones and Managed Protection Zones of this part of Kolkheti National Park, with the exception mentioned above.

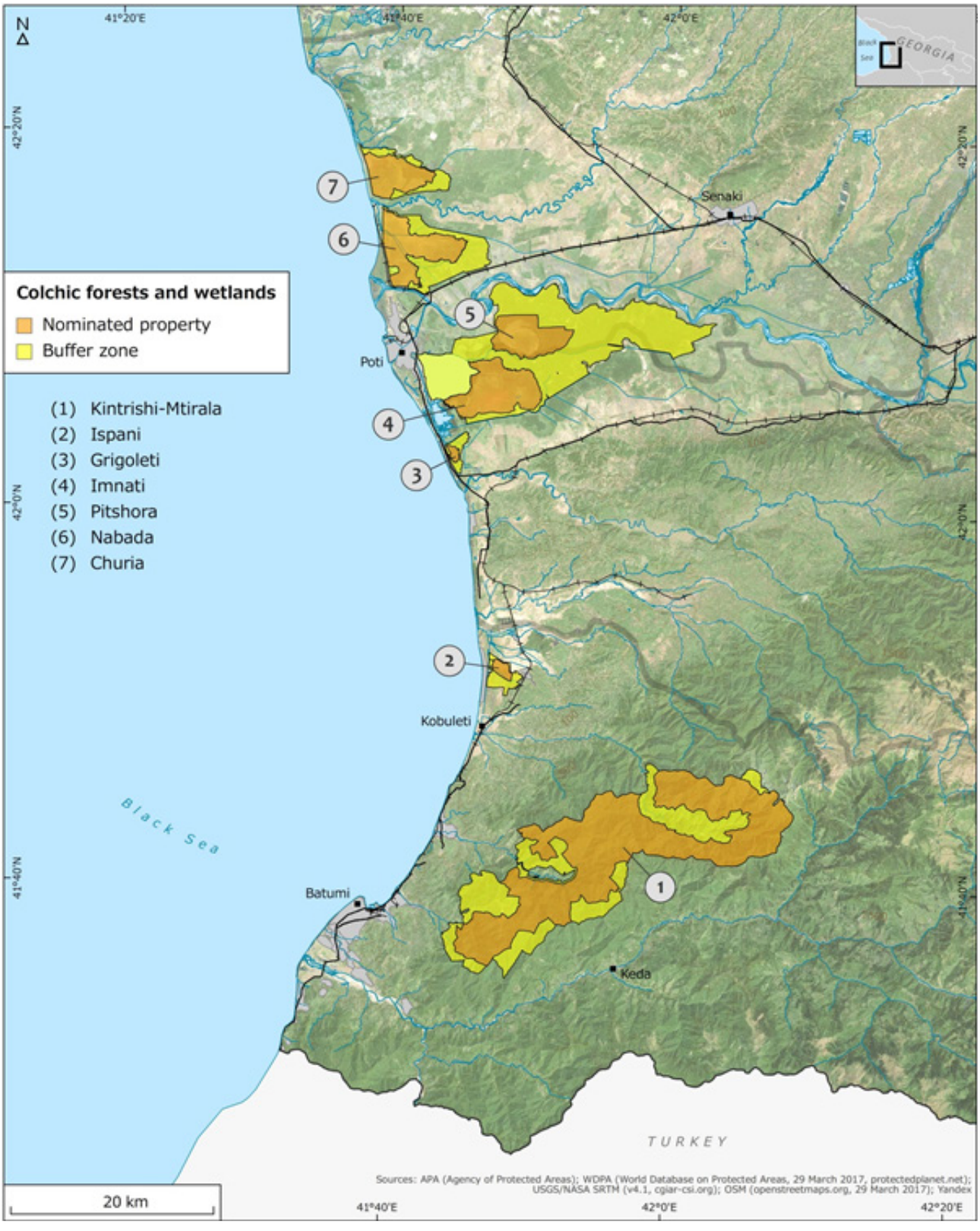
Boundaries of nominated component area No. 6: Nabada

Nabada nominated component area stretches along the coast of the Black Sea – but between 0.5 and 3 km inland – from the mouth of the Rioni River in the south to the Khobistskali River in the north. It is situated about 3 km to the north of the city of Poti and extends 9 km inland. The boundary of Nabada nominated component area mostly follows that of the part of the SPZ of Kolkheti National Park that has been established around Nabada Mire and its surrounding Colchic lowland forests. From the Rioni River, this border runs roughly northwards for 8.5 km, only forming a small dent to exclude the Partotskali Lake and its immediate surroundings. About 400 m before reaching the Khobistskali River, the boundary turns sharply towards the southeast and follows the northern, western and southern edge of Nabada Mire for 24 km, until it returns to the Rioni River. In this area, parts of the SPZ of Kolkheti National Park outside Nabada Mire are excluded from the nominated component area. The buffer zone follows the borders of the Traditional Use Zone of this part of Kolkheti National Park.

Boundary of nominated component area No. 7: Churia

Churia nominated component area stretches for 5 km along the coast of the Black Sea from the mouth of the Khobistskali River in the south to the mouth of the Churia River in the north, and extending up to 6.8 km inland. Its boundary coincides with that of the part of the SPZ of Kolkheti National Park that has been established around Churia Mire and its surrounding Colchic lowland forests: It runs north from the mouth of the Khobistskali River for 4.8 km, separated from the sea by a low sand dune. About 1 km south of the mouth of the Churia River, the boundary turns inland to the east and follows the southern bank of that river, first in a distance of about 600 m and then directly on the bank. After about 7 km, the boundary turns south and then roughly south-westwards, again following that of the SPZ, until it joins the seashore again near the mouth of the Khobistskali River. The buffer zone follows the borders of the Traditional Use Zone of this part of Kolkheti National Park.

Map of the nominated property, showing boundaries and buffer zone where present:



Criteria under which property is nominated: (ix), (x)

Draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

a) Brief synthesis

The Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands are situated in Georgia, within the Autonomous Republic of Adjara as well as the regions of Guria and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti. They are a series of seven component areas, which are located close to each other within an 80 km long corridor along the warm-temperate and extremely humid (annual precipitation up to 4,500 mm) eastern coast of the Black Sea. They consist of an almost complete altitudinal series of the most typical Colchic ecosystems running from sea level to > 2,500 m a.s.l. The main ecosystems are ancient deciduous Colchic rainforests on the one hand, and wetlands – particularly percolation bogs and other mire types of the Colchic mire region, a distinct mire region within Europe and Eurasia – on the other hand. These ecosystems harbour a peculiar and diverse flora and fauna, which is extremely rich in endemic and relict species of flora and fauna.

The property holds the oldest broad-leaved forests – together with the Hyrcanian forests of Iran and Azerbaijan – in western Eurasia. These are relict forests, which have survived the glacial cycles of the ice ages, and at the same time the most humid nemoral broad-leaved rainforests globally. They comprise an astonishingly diverse flora and fauna, with impressive densities of endemic and relict species. This is the result of millions of years of uninterrupted evolution and speciation processes within the Colchic Pliocene refugium.

The peatlands of the Colchis mire region, which are closely interlinked with lowland Colchic rainforests, also reflect the mild and extremely humid conditions there. These allow for the existence of percolation bogs, the simplest functional type of mires, which is fundamental to the understanding of mires and peatlands in general, and only occurs in the Colchis mire region. Percolation bogs are accompanied by a complete series of other succession stages of mire development in the Colchic wetlands.

b) Justification for Criteria

Criterion ix: The property comprises ancient Colchic rainforests with their characteristic vertical zoning and ecological succession, and wetlands (particularly Colchic mires) with their supporting processes and succession. The Colchic rainforests are the most humid temperate deciduous rainforests, and among the oldest nemoral broad-leaved forests globally. While they are distinguished from other temperate forests by their rich evergreen understoreys, they also display a remarkably dense mosaic of forest types, with 23 forest associations co-existing within an area of only about 200 km2. Together with the Hyrcanian forests, they are the most important relicts of Arcto-Tertiary forests in western Eurasia. Their peculiar and diverse community, which has survived the Pleistocene glacial cycles, includes a multitude of relict and endemic species. It reflects exceptionally constant climatic conditions and is an invaluable example of the manifold long-term evolutionary processes of forest biota over at least 10-15 million years.

The extensive paludified areas along the Black Sea coast are also due to the warm-temperate and very humid climate, which is extremely favourable for the growth of mires. Their exceptional character has led to the recognition of a distinct Colchis mire region. Of particular global importance are their percolation bogs, which exist nowhere else in the World and can be considered the simplest and hence “ideal” mire type, due to almost permanent water supply exclusively by precipitation. Percolation bogs are essential for the functional understanding of all mires, and hence of terrestrial carbon storage in general.

Criterion x: The series is home to almost 1,100 species of vascular plants (particularly woody species) and bryophytes, as well as almost 500 species of vertebrates, plus a high number of invertebrate species. It hosts an extremely high – for a non-tropical, non-island region – proportion of endemic species. There are 149 species of plants with a restricted range. The contribution of endemic species to herpetofauna and mammals of

the region (excl. bats) is 28%. Among these species are many relict species, which survived the glacial cycles of the Tertiary in this glacial refuge area and hence provide a window into the ancient past of Eurasia's natural heritage. Some of the Caucasian relict species, such as Nordmann's fir and Caucasian Salamander, have been isolated for over 14-15 millions of years from their closest relatives elsewhere. Of outstanding importance are also the gene pool and species which dispersed after the glaciations from the Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands to pan-Europe and northern Eurasia. Forty-four globally threatened or near-threatened species of vascular plants, 50 of vertebrates, and eight of invertebrates have been recorded in the Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands.

c) Statement of Integrity

The nominated component areas of the Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands have been selected based on a careful regional analysis. They cover most of the existing mires of the Colchis mire region, and the best preserved and most representative rainforests. They include more than 90% of the altitudinal range at which Colchic rainforests occur, and the great majority of typical forest associations. They also comprise a complete successional series of the mires characteristic of the Colchis mire region. The nominated component areas of the series together hold the great majority of the Colchic flora and fauna, and an even greater proportion of the endemic plant species found in the wider region is concentrated there.

There have been significant losses to the Colchic rainforests and mires of the Colchic region until the late 20th Century. In contrast, their representatives inside the nominated component areas of the series have remained fully intact both structurally and functionally, as shown by their community structure and ecological processes. While some of the Colchic mires were slightly degraded by nearby draining in the past, their current hydrological intactness and resilience is ensured by their dependence on atmospheric precipitation, high mire oscillation capacity, the stabilizing effect of the nearby sea, and extensive upstream buffer zones.

The nominated component areas are effectively protected against anthropogenic threats. Only small parts of the buffer zones of some of the component areas are slightly affected by traditional natural resource use.

d) Requirements for protection and management

The integrity of the Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands is ensured through effective protected areas management. All proposed component areas of the series – and all but 208 ha of the buffer zone – are situated on State-owned land within legally designated protected areas. These are either strictly protected areas (IUCN PA category Ia), or those zones of National Parks (IUCN PA category II) that afford the highest levels of protection. Only a very small part of the nominated property belongs to a protected landscape (IUCN PA category V). The boundaries of component areas incorporate all the attributes as set out in the nomination, mostly follow natural features (e.g. mountain ridges), and are known and accepted by the local population.

All four protected areas are managed by the Agency of Protected Areas of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, through its local PA administrations. Comprehensive management plans for three of them are in place, with the management plan of the fourth one in preparation and expected to be finalized by mid-2019. Coordination of component areas is ensured, as they are all managed by the Agency of Protected Areas and geographically close to each other. An integrated management framework of the property has been developed by the Agency of Protected Areas.

The capacity and resourcing of the local protected areas administrations to manage the Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands is sufficient, but could be improved. The Agency of Protected Areas and its partners have already taken steps to do so, in cooperation with local stakeholders, municipalities, and international partners: Three international cooperation projects have been investing in infrastructure, equipment, training, management capacity and institutional development of the three largest protected areas contributing to the series (i.e., Kolkheti National Park, Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas). In addition, Kintrishi Protected Areas and Mtirala National Park receive operational funding support from the Caucasus Nature

Fund, an ecoregional conservation trust fund. A National Capacity Building Plan for Protected Area Staff was developed in 2016, and is being implemented.

Name and contact information of official local institution/agency:

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