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# **World Heritage Patrimoine mondial**

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CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

CONVENTION CONCERNANT LA PROTECTION DU PATRIMOINE  
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**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

East Rennell (Solomon Islands) (854)  
Rennell Est (Îles Salomon) (854)

10-21 May/mai 2019

UNESCO World Heritage Centre — IUCN

MISSION REPORT



World Heritage Centre /IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission  
to the East Rennell World Heritage Property (Solomon Islands)

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REPORT ON THE MISSION TO EAST RENNELL, SOLOMON ISLANDS  
FROM 10 MAY TO 21 MAY 2019

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Cover photo: Children in a traditional dugout canoe along the western shore of Lake Tegano, East Rennell. While canoes are still used, most transportation on the Lake is by small motorized craft. © 2019 Brent A. Mitchell

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

DSOCR	Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ERWHP	East Rennell World Heritage property
ERWHTB	East Rennell World Heritage Site Trust Board
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
LTWHSA	Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association
MECDM	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
PAA	2010 Protected Areas Act (Solomon Islands)
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
SP	State Party (Solomon Islands)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHC	World Heritage Centre

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Sincere thanks are likewise due to the experts who made time available to share their insights, including Ms Stephanie Price, Ms Elmah Panisi (Live and Learn Environmental Education), Mr Steve Cranwell (Birdlife International), Mr Tatsuji Nishikawa (Ministry of Forestry and Research of Solomon Islands/JICA), Japan International Cooperation Agency - JICA, the High Commission of Australia and New Zealand in Honiara, the UNESCO Office in Apia, Ms Anna Chernyshova (UNDP) and Ms Vini Talai (UNOCHA).

Finally, the mission thanks the Committee members of the LTWHSA, government staff and all local communities of East Rennell who contributed to the organization of the mission.

All people consulted during the mission are listed in the Annex VI, possible omissions are unintentional and exclusively the authors' responsibility.



*Meeting of the mission team with tribal chiefs or their representatives. (Not technically a tribal council meeting in the absence of the paramount chief of East Rennell.)*  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Inscribed in 1998, East Rennell was the first natural property under customary ownership and management inscribed on the World Heritage List. The property was inscribed primarily as it is the largest raised coral atoll in the world, its unique Lake Tegano (the largest lake in the insular Pacific), and as an important site for the science of island biogeography, and its avifauna. About 1000 people of Polynesian origin live in the property and depend on it for their livelihood.

At the time of inscription ([Decision CONF 203 VIII.A.1](#)), while the nomination was largely supported and a natural World Heritage property under customary ownership was considered as “breaking new ground”, concerns were raised by some of the delegates of the World Heritage Committee on the practical modalities of customary land tenure (cooperative decision-making), lack of adequate legal protection, and the necessity for livelihood development in order to maintain local support for conservation.

These three unresolved issues, already identified in 1998, are the basis of concerns raised regarding lack of protection of the property from the impacts of commercial logging and mining activities, invasive species, and the inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2013 ([Decision 37 COM 7B.14](#)).

A joint UNESCO World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission took place from 10 to 21 May 2019.

The mission considers that the real long-term threat to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property is the lack of alternative income generating mechanisms to commercial logging and mining. Without sustainable livelihoods, local support for the World Heritage designation (and as such the temporary ban on commercial logging and mining) will erode. Tourism, albeit not a magical solution, is one alternative due to the splendid nature of the property and the existing basic tourism-infrastructure already present. Currently almost no tourists visit the property while a limited number of tourists could already generate a flow of cash sufficient to counterbalance the allure of commercial logging and mining.

The mission considers that the OUV of the property is intact, but that the lack of a legal instrument to protect the integrity of the property in the long term is a key issue that needs to be resolved. The ecosystems of the inscribed property also appear to remain largely intact. However, any assessment of the state of conservation is hampered by a lack of baseline information on species abundance in any part of the property. To adequately protect the OUV and integrity of the property while enhancing livelihoods of local communities, the mission suggests the following corrective measures as a matter of urgency:

- a) Adopt a new Cabinet Paper, prepared by the three Chairs of the 2017 Round Table, reconfirming the 2016 Cabinet Paper, reaffirming all Round Table Ministerial commitments for East Rennell and directing all ministries to provide a concrete timeline and budget for their implementation;
- b) Ensure that the Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association (LTWHSA) can officially and immediately apply for National Protected Areas status for the World Heritage property in order to initiate the official consultation process by the Director of the Environment and Conservation Division, and to finalize the Management Plan (including zoning);
- c) Ensure that the World Heritage property is actively promoted, including on the website of the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau and on all relevant maps and promotional leaflets, and

immediately begin actively promoting appropriate tourism using existing accommodations and facilities;

The mission also makes the following recommendations to the State Party:

- 1) In order to facilitate the designation of the property under the 2010 Protected Areas Act, clarify the consent provision of the Act, particularly as it pertains to the 'interested parties' who would need to be involved in the process (see Section 10, subsection 7 c);
- 2) Provide the LTWHSA with the support needed to manage the World Heritage property to international standards, including an office, technical support (an officer from Ministry of Environment or an international volunteer), funding to implement the Management Plan, and a public information centre, with the overall aim of making the LTWHSA self-sustaining;
- 3) Improve access to the property for tourists and local communities by upgrading the road from Tingoa to Hutuna and upgrading the Tingoa air strip, while ensuring that this does not result in negative impacts on the OUV of the property and follows the necessary impact assessment procedures;
- 4) Improve access to basic services and facilities through construction of a telecommunication tower, postal agency, banking agency, medical centre, water and sanitation, and sport and recreation facilities;
- 5) Prioritize the development of sustainable livelihoods for the local communities, recognizing the important role played by women in East Rennell, including through a development plan; and seek long-term technical and financial support from the international community for this effort, including for example through Global Environmental Facilities (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF) and a World Heritage Trust Fund;
- 6) Ensure the Rennell-Bellona Constituency Development Fund reserves an allocation for East Rennell and its local communities;
- 7) Develop a scientific research programme at Lake Tegano, seeking support from the international research community and also incorporating traditional ecological knowledge, to collect data on: Tilapia stocks, taro cultivation and other agricultural activities, coconut crab over-harvesting, water quality, invasive species, ecological connectivity between East and West Rennell, ecological connectivity between the sea and the lake, forest cover through satellite images, hydrographic survey of the lake, and climate change impacts;
- 8) Continue and expand the recently started bird monitoring program, and seek international support to mitigate the effects of invasive species, including *Rattus rattus*, on agricultural activities and rare and endemic species;
- 9) Ensure that EIAs are carried out for all proposed developments within the property and its vicinity (e.g. road upgrades, tourism accommodation) and in line with IUCN's World Heritage Advice Note on Environmental Assessment and Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines to guarantee that these developments do not have a negative impact on the OUV of the property ;
- 10) Consider registering and surveying all lands in the World Heritage property under the Registration of Customary Lands Act, prioritizing the western shore of the lake, where most people live and where initial tourism lodges should be clustered;
- 11) Record and map local culture, traditional and living knowledge, customary governance, genealogies and language of the East Rennell communities while they are still being practiced, with a view of possibly re-nominating the property, in the long term, as a cultural landscape;
- 12) Consider assessing, in the 2020 State of Conservation Report, whether the current timeframe for implementing the Desired State of Conservation for the Removal of the



property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) by 2021 is realistic and, if not, requesting an extension from the World Heritage Committee.

## 1 BACKGROUND TO THE MISSION

### 1.1 Inscription history of the property

East Rennell was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1998, primarily as it is the largest raised coral atoll in the world, its unique Lake Tegano –the largest lake in the insular Pacific-, and as an important site for the science of island biogeography, and its avifauna. It was the first natural property inscribed on the World Heritage List under customary ownership and management. About 1000 people of Polynesian origin live in the property and depend on it for their livelihood. The original inscription under natural criterion (ii) corresponds with today's criterion (ix)<sup>1</sup>.

The nomination was supported by New Zealand and came with a donor programme focused on ecotourism and small business. The donor programme was suspended in 2000, primarily on account of civil unrest and government instability in the Solomon Islands, leaving the projects uncompleted<sup>2</sup>.



Fig. 1: Map of Rennell Island and the World Heritage property.

Source: 1997 Nomination Dossier.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Full statement of Outstanding Universal Value available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/854/>

<sup>2</sup> Dingwall, 2012. Report on the Reactive Monitoring Mission to East Rennell, Solomon Island, 21-29 October 2012. Available at <http://whc.unesco.org/document/122248>

<sup>3</sup> Available at: [http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/854/multiple=1&unique\\_number=1005](http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/854/multiple=1&unique_number=1005)

The WHC re-established contact with Solomon Islands and the World Heritage property in 2005. In 2007, the World Heritage Committee called upon the international donor community to provide financial and technical support for conservation and management of the property. A draft management plan was prepared in 2007 with technical assistance from WWF and financial support from the World Heritage Fund. From 2007-2014, the Australian Government supported the strengthening of the management capacity in East Rennell through the AusAID Pacific Governance Support Programme (for full list of supported projects see Dingwall, 2012).

In 2013, following an IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission in 2012, the property was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger primarily because of the threat of commercial logging and the lack of a legal mechanism to stop these activities. There was also concern for overexploitation of marine resources and coconut crab, impacts of bauxite mining in West Rennell, invasive species (black rat, giant African snail) and impacts from climate change.

Following a WHC/IUCN Advisory Mission in November 2015<sup>4</sup>, a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) was developed. The DSOCR was officially submitted by the State Party of Solomon Islands and adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 41st session in 2017 ([Decision 41 COM 7A.19](#)). The DSOCR is available in Annex III and specifies 5 key indicators for removal of the property from the List in Danger:

- Forest cover in the property is maintained measured against the 2013 baseline (time of inscription on the Danger List)
- Any extractive activities in West Rennell (logging, mining) are managed in a way that would prevent any negative impact on the OUV of the property and its integrity
- Threats to the OUV of the property from already introduced invasive species have been identified and minimized and biosecurity measures have been established to prevent new introductions
- Coconut crab and other marine resources are harvested in a sustainable manner based on traditional resource use regimes
- The management plan for the sustainable management of the property has been officially adopted and is being implemented

In February 2016, a technical workshop<sup>5</sup> was organized to gather and analyse satellite images of Rennell Island to identify the changes in forest and vegetation cover within the property and on the entire Rennell Island. The workshop concluded that undisturbed forest cover in the property is well over 95% of the total land area of the property and that no commercial logging has occurred within the property<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> With support from the UNESCO Flanders Funds-in-Trust. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1389/>

<sup>5</sup> Organized by the International Centre on Space Technologies for Natural and Cultural Heritage under the auspices of UNESCO (HIST, China) with financial support from the Netherlands Funds-In-Trust and with participation of the State Party representatives and the World Heritage Centre. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/events/1283/>

<sup>6</sup> Mengmeng Wang, Guojin He, Natarajan Ishwaran, Tianhua Hong, Andy Bell, Zhaoming Zhang, Guizhou Wang & Meng Wang .2018. Monitoring vegetation dynamics in East Rennell Island World Heritage Site using multi-sensor and multi-temporal remote sensing data, International Journal of Digital Earth, DOI: 10.1080/17538947.2018.1523955

Following constructive discussions during the 2015 WHC/IUCN mission, the SIG adopted a Cabinet Paper in September 2016 (Annex VII) to prioritize efforts made for the ERWHP<sup>7</sup>. An inter-ministerial Core Team for World Heritage was convened to implement the Cabinet decisions.

In August 2017, SIG organized a national Round Table where several Ministries made concrete commitments to remove the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger and develop income-generating activities for the local communities<sup>8</sup>.



*Bauxite transshipment site, west side of Kangava Bay, approximately 8 km. from the World Heritage Site.  
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On 3 May 2018, the WHC received a letter from supposedly “*the Tuhunui Tribe of East Rennell*” (quote) noting that in its recent Council Meeting the Tuhunui Tribe decided to “*withdraw all its customary land from the World Heritage Program Site in East Rennell*”. The letter also states that all previous negotiations regarding the nomination of East Rennell and subsequently its World Heritage status “*were made by community elected groups and not Tribes who owned the many land areas*”. It further notes that it opposes the proposal by the SIG to declare the area of the property as protected under the 2010 Protected Area Act (PAA). The petition submitted to the WHC by the supposedly Tuhunui Tribe if legitimate would have raised serious concerns on the practical modalities of customary ownership, management and decision-making.

On 2 February 2019, the MV Trader Solomon Islands ran aground in Kangava Bay, just 2 km away from the World Heritage boundary. Almost 80 tons of crude oil spilled in Kangava Bay. SIG requested the support from Australia and New Zealand and thanks to their swift and substantial intervention, a major disaster was averted. The SP reported in its 2019 report that no oil has been observed inside the World Heritage property<sup>9</sup>.



*MV Solomon Trader on 18 May 2019.  
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<sup>7</sup> Solomon Islands Government. 2017. State of Conservation Report for East Rennell. Available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/document/157240>

<sup>8</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1719/>

<sup>9</sup> The World Heritage property is considered not to include any marine area in Kangava Bay. See also chapter 3.9 for more information on the boundaries of the property.

## **1.2 Integrity issues raised in the IUCN evaluation report at time of inscription**

In its nomination evaluation in 1998, IUCN raised three integrity issues that needed to be addressed as follows<sup>10</sup>:

**Boundaries:** from an integrity perspective it would be more logic to include Rennell Island in its entirety as a World Heritage site. A study by J. Diamond claimed that the forest in East Rennell alone is not sufficiently large to ensure long-term survival of the endemic birds. Local communities in West Rennell where not favourable to be included in the nomination file.

**Customary land tenure:** land in Rennell is owned under the traditional customary system, limiting the ability of the central government to protect the site. IUCN stressed the need for an outline of the management objectives and prescriptions for protection of the site, and that until this is available it is not possible to state how customary practices in fact will provide this protection.

**Local support for conservation:** IUCN was impressed during the field mission by statements from the local chiefs and paramount chief on their desire for sustainable development for East Rennell. The World Heritage initiative is very much linked to the desire of the Rennellese people to encourage ecotourism in the area. This will require a significant amount of education, training and cooperative decision-making.

## **1.3 Previous Decisions on the State of Conservation of the property**

SIG submitted a state of conservation report in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2017 and 2019. The following is a summary of the main state of conservation issues, the requests and recommendations made by the World Heritage Committee, and the State Party responses.

### **Lack of legal protection mechanism**

One of the key issues for the last 20 years is the lack of a legal mechanism that protects the property from commercial logging and mining, and that would clarify management arrangements. When the property was inscribed in 1998, the Committee requested the SP to adopt the draft World Heritage Protection Bill. This bill, combined with the customary management of the property, was believed to provide sufficient assurances that the integrity of the property could be protected ([Decision CONF 203 VIII.A.1](#)).

In 2007, the Committee noted with concern that the draft World Heritage Protection Bill had not yet been adopted ([Decision 31 COM 7B.21](#)). In 2013, the Committee urged the SP to apply both PAA and the 2009 Rennell-Bellona Province Lake Tegano Heritage Park Ordinance to the ERWHP as soon as possible ([Decision 37 COM 7B.14](#)). In 2017, the SP indicated that the application of the PAA is a priority but requires more consultation with local communities. The 2016 Cabinet Paper directed MECDM to consult with the landowners including LTWHSA and relevant stakeholders to register the property as a Protected Area under the PAA. In 2017, the Committee urged the SP to expedite the designation of the property under the PAA and the finalization of the Management Plan, with the consent of the customary owners ([Decision 41 COM 7A.19](#)). In 2018, the Committee noted with utmost concern the letter submitted to the WHC by the supposedly Tuhunui Tribe of East Rennell, raising serious concerns on the practical modalities of customary ownership, management and decision-making ([Decision 42 COM 7A.41](#)). Other legislation has been explored<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> IUCN. 1998. World Heritage Nomination - IUCN Technical Evaluation: East Rennell (Solomon Islands). Available at: <https://whc.unesco.org/document/154449>

<sup>11</sup> The Environment Act 1998 and the Wildlife Management and Protection Act 1998 have provisions relevant to the property, but these are often not effectively enforced at local level, and there is some



## Management Authority

In 2005, the Committee encouraged the SP to establish a single representative body within the East Rennell community for overseeing the East Rennell World Heritage Management Plan and assisting in coordinating any World Heritage projects or other related actions ([Decision 29 COM 7B.10](#)). In 2007, the State Party informed that it had given the East Rennell World Heritage Site Trust Board (ERWHTB) the role of administration and management of the property. In 2012-2014, two opposing World Heritage Site Trust Boards were reformed into the Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association (LTWHSA). In its 2017 report, the SP highlighted the “non-clarity of the different roles Governments, LTWHSA Committee and customary owners play in managing the World Heritage Site.”

## Management Plan

At the time of inscription on the World Heritage List in 1998, the Committee recommended "that the SP should proceed with the preparation of the Resource Management Plan...". In 2007, the Committee requested modifications to a first draft management plan that was prepared with support from the World Heritage Fund and submitted in 2007 ([Decision 31 COM 7B.21](#)). A second draft management plan was prepared in 2014 with support from Australia. In 2014, 2015 and 2016, the Committee urged the SP to expedite the completion and implementation of the revised management plan and to provide copies for review by the WHC and IUCN (Decisions [38 COM 7A.29](#), [39 COM 7A.16](#) and [40 COM 7A.49](#)). No management plan has been submitted so far. The adoption of a management plan is one of the indicators of the DSOCR adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2017. In 2019, the LTWHSA requested the MECDM and Ministry of Education to rewrite the plan and simplify its language. During the mission MECDM and LTWHSA indicated they aim to finalize this in 2019 and, after consultation with LTWSHA and Council of Chiefs, adopt before the end of 2019.



*Community meeting in Tevaitahe village, East Rennell Island.*  
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uncertainty as to the relative powers of national and customary laws in respect of land and resources under customary ownership and traditional management (Price, 2018).

## **Commercial logging**

Since 2010, the World Heritage Committee has expressed its concern on several occasions about commercial logging on Rennell Island. It was the application for commercial logging rights within the property in 2012 that triggered Danger Listing as commercial logging within a World Heritage property would represent an ascertained danger in line with Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines. Furthermore, the World Heritage Committee has a clear position that commercial logging is incompatible with World Heritage status ([Decision 37 COM 7](#)). No commercial logging has actually occurred within the property and a Cabinet decision was adopted in 2016 that prohibits all logging in the property. The Cabinet decision was first put up to the test in 2018, when an application was submitted that included parts of the property. The Ministry of Environment refused the application on the basis of the Cabinet decision, and the company OTC submitted a new application for logging up to 200 metres of the property boundary, which was approved and currently underway. It is to be noted that if East Rennell would be declared under the PAA, a buffer zone of 1 km would apply where no logging activities are permitted.

With regards to logging in West Rennell, outside the property, IUCN<sup>12</sup> has noted that the forest located within the property's boundaries is intrinsically linked to the forests in West Rennell and that on its own, the East Rennell forest is insufficiently large to ensure the long-term survival of endemic birds. This was the basis for the Committee's request, in 2012 and 2013, to ban all commercial logging from Rennell Island (Decisions [36 COM 7B.15](#) and [38 COM 7A.29](#)). The Committee has requested several times, in 2014, 2015 and 2016, to mitigate the impacts of existing logging operations, including related to invasive species that are being brought to Rennell Island by the logging operations.

Furthermore, as the grounding of the MV Solomon Trader showed, maritime activity in the Kangava Bay associated with logging in West Rennell does pose a potential threat to the OUV of the property.

## **Bauxite mining**

In 2014, 2015 and 2016, the World Heritage Committee noted with concern the plans to commence bauxite mining in West Rennell, and requested the SP to undertake rigorous EIAs for these plans to demonstrate that they will not have an impact on the property. An EIA was provided in 2015 that stated that the mining activity in West Rennell does not have an impact on East Rennell as both areas are geologically not connected (according to the EIA). The State Party also confirmed in 2016 that no bauxite mining is ongoing inside the property. In 2017, the Committee urged the State Party to defer consideration of bauxite mining license applications until a better understanding of the ecological links between East and West Rennell is available. It is to be noted that if East Rennell would be declared under the PAA, a buffer zone of 1 km would apply where no mining activities are permitted.

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<sup>12</sup> IUCN 1998 Advisory Body Evaluation; 2012 IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission report

### **Over-exploitation of marine resources and coconut crab**

In 2012 and 2013, the Committee urged the SP to make an immediate assessment of the overexploitation of Coconut Crab and other marine resources. An International Assistance Request was approved in 2012<sup>13</sup> for conducting survey activities although monitoring of coconut crab was not included in the survey.



*Coconut crab. © 2019 Brent A. Mitchell*

In 2013, the Committee requested to apply harvesting regimes based on traditional resource management practices, including the restrictions recommended by the 2012 IUCN mission. These measures should be part of the management plan (and were included in the 2007 and 2014 draft management plans), and were also included in the DSOCR adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2017.

### **Effects of climate change**

In 2013, the Committee requested the SP to take full account of the impacts of climate change on the property and the livelihoods of the East Rennell community, and make provisions in the Management Plan for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures. In 2019, the SP reported that the impacts of climate change are increasingly felt by the communities in the ERWHP and that sea level rise has resulted in increasing water levels and salinity in Lake Tegano, reducing the harvest of taro and coconut. The SP also reported that long droughts are of particular concern and that the impact of the current El Nino on the surrounding reefs and species living in ERWHP is unknown.

### **Lack of support from Solomon Islands Government for East Rennell**

In 2005, the Committee expressed its concerns regarding the lack of SIG support to the property. In 2010, the Committee recommended the SP to apply for international assistance (Decision [34 COM 7B.17](#)). An international assistance request was received in 2012 (survey of marine environment) and 2016 (community consultations towards designation of the PAA). In 2016, the Committee encouraged the SP to develop an Action Plan which would prioritize local communities and alternative income generating mechanisms that derive benefits from the conservation of the property's OUV. In 2017, the Committee called upon the international community to provide support to the SP in its efforts to implement the DSOCR and to develop sustainable livelihoods for the customary owners of the property. In 2018, the Committee considered that the long-term conservation of the property's OUV can only be secured with the full consent of the customary land owners and land users in full respect of their rights (Decision [42 COM 7A.41](#)). It also considered that the development of sustainable livelihoods for the local communities is of utmost importance, and requested the SP to seek technical and financial support to address this issue and called upon the international community to support the SP with this effort.

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<sup>13</sup> Survey of the Condition of the Marine Ecosystem within the East Rennell World Heritage Area.  
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/intassistance/2413/>

## **Invasive Species**

In 2012 and 2013, the Committee requested the SP to urgently undertake an assessment of the impact of invasive species, especially rats and invasive snails, to institute control and eradication measures as a matter of utmost priority, and to assess the feasibility of a long-term biosecurity programme to prevent reinvasion. In 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 the Committee requested the SP to undertake urgent action to halt the further spread of rats on Rennell Island and prevent them from entering the property, and to put in place the biosecurity controls necessary to prevent further introductions of invasive species to the island, and reiterated its invitation to the SP to apply for International Assistance to support this work. The issue of invasive species is one of the indicators in the DSOCR adopted by the Committee in 2017. In 2019, the SP indicated that an assessment was done in cooperation with BirdLife International which confirmed that rats are well established in areas of habitation on Rennell Island, along coastlines and roads, while the rat was not detected inside large areas of intact forest.

### **1.4 Justification of the current Reactive Monitoring mission**

Because of the letter submitted by supposedly Tuhunui Tribe, the absence of a State of Conservation report in 2018 and the lack of update on the commitments made at the national Round Table, the World Heritage Committee requested the SP in its Decision **42 COM 7A.41** to invite a Reactive Monitoring mission to the property.

The joint WHC / IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission was originally planned for early 2019 but was postponed due to the general elections in Solomon Islands which took place on 3 March 2019.

The mission took place from 10 to 21 May 2019. The mission was comprised of Robbert Casier and Akane Nakamura representing the WHC and Brent Mitchell and Ifereimi Dau representing IUCN. A copy of the terms of reference of the mission and Committee Decision **42 COM 7A.41** are provided in Annexes I and II, respectively.

During the visit to Solomon Islands, the mission met with key Ministries and their representatives, UN Agencies, NGOs and their representatives, local communities of East Rennell in Honiara and in the villages, the Paramount Chief of East Rennell, the Council of Chiefs, Heads of Families, international donors and representatives of Bintan Mining Company. The mission undertook a field visit to East Rennell from 14 to 19 May 2019. The mission further travelled to Kangava Bay and the location of the bulk carrier grounding and subsequent oil spill of February 2019. A full programme of the mission and a list of people met during the mission is included in Annexes 4 and 6 of this report. Following the visit, the mission team consulted a wide range of national and international experts and several NGOs with regard to the state of conservation of the property, customary law and the PAA.



## 2 NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY

### 2.1 Protected area/national legislation

To date, the ERWHP is not specifically protected by national legislation. The 2010 Protected Areas Act (PAA)<sup>14</sup> and 2012 Protected Area Regulations<sup>15</sup> entered into force in 2012, 14 years after the property was inscribed on the World Heritage List. While the Act establishes a system of protected areas, the Regulations detail the requirements and management arrangements for protected areas<sup>16</sup>. To date, only a few areas have been designated under the Act, but none have resident customary landowners. (The Act also provides for the establishment of a Protected Areas Trust Fund but it has not been actualized.) The Regulations include a specific article on the classification of World Heritage properties:

- (1) Any area within Solomon Islands that is listed under the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage as a world heritage site shall be declared as a protected area under any or more of the classes of protected areas;
- (2) Upon being classified under a class of protected area, the provisions of the Act and these Regulations shall apply to such site<sup>17</sup>.

The PAA and its regulations thus provide the framework for the MEDCM to support the designation of the property under the Act. It is the intention of the authorities to declare East Rennell as an IUCN Protected Area Category VI Habitat/Species Management Area, corresponding to category V in the national system, that is, areas which conserve ecosystems, together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems. Generally large, mainly in a natural condition, with a proportion under sustainable natural resource management and where low-level non-industrial natural resource use compatible with nature conservation is seen as one of the main aims.<sup>18</sup> It is also assumed that a future PAA designation would follow the boundaries of the property as inscribed by the World Heritage Committee.

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<sup>14</sup> 2010 Protected Areas Act, Solomon Islands. Available at:

<http://www.parliament.gov.sb/files/legislation/Acts/2010/Protected%20Areas%20Act%202010.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> 2012 Protected Area Regulations, Solomon Islands. Available at

<http://www.spc.int/CoastalFisheries/CFM/Document/ShowDocument/5e1508b5-450e-4884-a46c-3d88ea2acf9a?attachment=True>

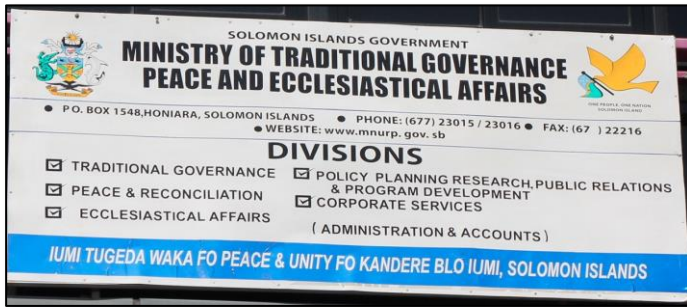
<sup>16</sup> IUCN. 2013. Review of Policy and Legislation Relating to the Use and Management of Mangrove Ecosystems in the Solomon Islands. Available at:

[https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/solomon\\_islands\\_policy\\_and\\_legislative\\_review\\_report.pdf](https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/solomon_islands_policy_and_legislative_review_report.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> More background on the Act and its Regulations is available at

<http://www.reddplussolomonislands.gov.sb/index.php/resources/related-legislation/protected-areas-act-2010.html>

<sup>18</sup> Dudley, N. (Editor) (2008). *Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. x + 86pp. WITH Stolton, S., P. Shadie and N. Dudley (2013). *IUCN WCPA Best Practice Guidance on Recognising Protected Areas and Assigning Management Categories and Governance Types*, Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 21, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. ISBN 978-2-8317-1636-7



*A Ministry of Traditional Governance was established in 2019.  
© 2019 Brent A. Mitchell*

As stated above, during the nomination evaluation in 1998 IUCN stressed the need for an outline of the management objectives and prescriptions for protection of the site. Twenty years on there is still no accepted management plan in place for East Rennell. Several drafts have been prepared, most recently in 2014.

The mission team were told that finalizing a plan is a priority this year for the SP and the local management association. However, no draft was provided nor provisions outlined during the visit, and no significant changes to the 2014 draft were described.

Though official designation is still lacking, the property has been afforded some protection from logging and mining through a policy instrument following the Cabinet decision of 2016 banning the issuance of Felling Licences within East Rennell as per the map kept at Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management & Meteorology and more particularly the northern border described as 160°20'34"E-11°39'52"; and southern boundary 160°18'15"E - 11°43'06"S." This Cabinet directive has been the management mechanism by which the SIG has been able to stop logging companies from entering the ERWHP. There is no similar directive though for the mining Minister or ministry.

In 2009 a Rennell-Bellona Province Lake Tegano Natural Heritage Park Ordinance was drafted but never passed.

## 2.2 Institutional framework

The institutional framework of ERWHP is complicated, and it is showing signs of transition. As a property inscribed under customary governance, key institutions are local, though they expect support from the SP. The population is organized in tribes, with approximately 1,000 people belonging to 14 tribes. From arrival of the Polynesian population in approximately 1400 until the 1800s, tribes were distributed around the Lake. Today people are aggregated in four settlements on the western lakeshore, namely Hutuna, Tegano, Niupani and Tevaitahe villages. There are 14 tribes in East Rennell. Tribe members are mixed among the communities, with some also living in West Rennell and a significant number (particularly working age men) residing permanently in the capital, Honiara. Each tribe has a chief, a patrilineal hereditary position. Presiding over the 14-member Council of Chiefs is a Paramount Chief, a role that is also hereditary. The Council of Chiefs and its Paramount Chief have traditional authority over all decisions related to land ownership. The Paramount Chief is from the same Tuhunui tribe of which other members sent a letter to UNESCO in 2018 claiming ownership of most of the World Heritage property and



*Fishing in Lake Tegano. The SIG plans to introduce a new hybrid tilapia to increase harvests.  
© 2019 Brent A. Mitchell*

expressing a desire to withdraw. The Paramount Chief resides in Honiara and has not visited East Rennell in many years. Several other tribal chiefs live or spend most of their time in the capital. Ten tribal chiefs attended the mission's meeting with the Council of Chiefs, while the four other tribal chiefs sent representatives. The mission met another tribal chief residing in Honiara while in the capital. The hereditary role of Paramount Chief, practiced for 23 generations, may soon be replaced by an election among the 14 chiefs or amongst members of the Tuhunui tribe.

The second key local institution is the Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association (LTWHSA), a community-based organization established as the management authority for the property since 2014. The LTWHSA elects a Committee every two years, and has a fixed number of positions such as village representatives, women representatives and youth representatives<sup>19</sup>. The LTWHSA is the acknowledged local management authority for the property. In the past, the Committee has been plagued with internal weaknesses, with many allegations of mismanagement of funds and other improprieties. However, the current chairperson is dynamic and well-respected. He is also one of the 14 chiefs of the area. Association leaders have identified revision of the group's bylaws as a priority for the next year.

A third level of authority is emerging in East Rennell, that of Heads of Families. Individuals are reportedly asserting more private rights to property, distinct from tribes. This may be related to the granting of logging and mining concessions to foreign interests on West Rennell and the desire of some in the East to capitalize on opportunities to which chiefs might not assent. The number of Heads of Families is estimated at 80 but this may be disputed when consent needs to be formalized. Many instances of land ownership disputes were related to the mission team, frustrating needed infrastructure development for livelihoods and tourism.

This trend is immediately significant given the consent provision of the PAA. More fundamentally, if customary management practices are changing or eroding it calls into question the management paradigm for the property. A better understanding of power relationships among local institutions is needed to secure customary management of the property for the future.<sup>20</sup>

The SP asserts no direct control over management of the property and must defer to the customary owners. However, the SIG must meet its commitments to ensure that the property is managed according to World Heritage standards; similarly the communities expect assistance from the national government. The World Heritage focal point is in the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology (MECDM). The UNESCO National Commission (two staff) are with the Ministry of Education. Many other ministries should support the property (MECDM receives only 2.5-3% of



*Two of the 14 tribal chiefs. On the left is George Tauika, Chairperson of the Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association. © 2019 Brent A. Mitchell*

<sup>19</sup> The LTWHSA in its current form, its constitution was developed in the framework of the AusAID Pacific Governance Support Programme (2007-2014).

<sup>20</sup> Price, Stephanie. 2018. Implementing Solomon Islands' Protected Areas Act: opportunities and challenges for World Heritage conservation. *Asia Pacific Journal of Environmental Law*, Vol. 21(2):147-170

the national budget). Communities look especially to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism for an ecotourism promotion program and to the Ministry of Infrastructure Development to improve the road and airstrip. The mission team encountered a widely held, inaccurate belief that the SIG receives an annual appropriation from UNESCO to manage the property. Frustration with a lack of government support is so high that the mission team were frequently asked if East Rennell could change the state party, which of course is impossible. It is worth noting that the peace in the Solomon Islands was assisted by a regional assistance mission for 14 years, a response to conflicts of land alienation on Guadalcanal, ending in 2017.

The mission team were unsuccessful in meeting with any officials of the Renbel Provincial Government (Rennell and Bellona islands) in Tingo, the regional capital, nor Honiara, where they were located during the mission's time in the country for consultations with the new Government.

Few nongovernmental organizations have attempted to assist East Rennell. The exceptions are the NGO Live and Learn Environmental Education<sup>21</sup> and, more recently, BirdLife International.

Religion plays an important role in community life with nearly all residents being members of one of two Christian faiths, Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) in Hutuna and Tegano Villages, and South Seas Evangelical Church (SSEC) in Niupani and Tevaitahe Villages, since their conversion to Christianity in 1938. However the church is not directly involved in decision making regarding land ownership, people do not defer to church leaders on land use, and neither church is a direct landholder.

### **2.3 Management Structure**

The ERWHP has no staff or dedicated management capacity. Officers and members of LTWHSA, the management authority, are all volunteers. The chairperson, for example, is a full-time schoolteacher. The SP focal point for World Heritage has other duties at MECMD and is based in Honiara. A need for rangers was identified several times to the mission team but no position has ever been filled. Thus management capacity for the property has changed little since inscription.

The LTWHSA is considering expanding membership to include landholders in the village of Abataihe. Situated on the hills above Kangava Bay, the village is outside the boundary of the property. However, villagers have land claims inside the ERWHP, as well as the buffer strip. The team held a meeting at Abataihe and leaders indicated they are interested in joining the LTWHSA.

## **3 IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF ISSUES and THREATS**

### **3.1 Lack of legal protection mechanism**

Twenty years after inscription and despite numerous requests from the World Heritage Committee, the property still lacks an adequate legal mechanism to protect the OUV. It is clear that for a variety of reasons the customary governance structure alone cannot provide sufficient assurances to, for example, prevent commercial logging and mining in the property. The mission considers that resolving this issue is primordial for the eventual removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger.

While different legal mechanisms have been explored (provincial ordinance, Environment Act 1998, Wildlife Management and Protection Act 1998), the PAA is an appropriate response to the legally plural nature of Solomon Islands, and the overlap between protected area regulation and

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<sup>21</sup> <https://livelearn.org/>

customary laws<sup>22</sup>. The mission considers that the most appropriate and realistic way forward is the designation of the property under the PAA. The Protected Areas Regulation (2012) already provides avenues where World Heritage sites can be protected and the regulation also provides the pathway where such recognition under the Act can be done.

Defining and adopting an adequate legal mechanism to continue protecting the property from commercial logging and mining while safeguarding customary rights to land and natural resources for sustainable use, in line with Paragraph 119 of the Operational Guidelines<sup>23</sup>, is critical to ensure long-term mutual benefits to the property and the local communities, who are custodians of the property. The mission notes that the establishment of an IUCN category VI protected area could be a good tool to achieve this.

Category VI protected areas, uniquely amongst the IUCN categories system, have the sustainable use of natural resources as a means to achieve nature conservation, together and in synergy with other actions more common to the other categories, such as protection. In general, IUCN recommends that a proportion of the area is retained in a natural condition, which in some cases might imply its definition as a no-take management zone. Some countries have set this as two-thirds.<sup>24</sup> (IUCN's Category VI corresponds to Category V in the Solomon Islands system.)

Designation of East Rennell as a national protected area has not begun formally as yet, due in large part to the requirement that “the consent and approval are obtained from persons having rights or interests in the area.” While laudatory, this clause is vague and could be interpreted to mean that any one individual could block a designation.

The process for designation, as outlined in the Act, is for the “owner of any area” to apply to the Director of the Environment Ministry, MECDM, who then must conduct consultations, verify rights and interests in the area, evaluate the biodiversity significance and protection and management options. Given the customary ownership of land and the consent provision, the management authority of the ERWHP (see below) would represent the landowners in making application but has not yet formally requested designation. Hesitation within local communities to request designation reflects a high level of distrust of the national and provincial governments stemming, in part, from the many logging and mining leases the SIG has granted on West Rennell. To date, SIG and others have provided technical advice and informal consultations on the Act with communities. To begin formal consultations they must wait for a request for designation from the communities. The mission team recommend that the management authority make such request soon so that formal consultations may begin.

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<sup>22</sup> Price, S. 2018. Implementing Solomon Islands' Protected Areas Act: opportunities and challenges for World Heritage conservation. *Asia Pacific Journal of Environmental Law*. Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 147-170.

<sup>23</sup> Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/>

<sup>24</sup> Dudley, N. 2008.



The mission considers it crucial that:

***Corrective measure (b)***

***The LTWHSA can officially and immediately apply for National Protected Areas status for the World Heritage property in order to initiate the official consultation process by the Director of the Environment and Conservation Division, and to finalize the Management Plan (including zoning).***

The mission further recommends that:

***Recommendation (1)***

***The State Party clarifies the consent provision of the 2010 Protected Areas Act, particularly as it pertains to the 'interested parties' who would need to be involved in the process (Section 10, subsection 7,c) in order to facilitate the designation of the property under the National Protected Areas Act.***

### **3.2 Absence of sustainable livelihoods**

The mission considers that the real long-term threat to the OUV is the lack of alternative income generating mechanisms to commercial logging and mining. Without sustainable livelihoods, local support for the World Heritage designation will erode further. Mining and logging companies also provide several services to communities in West Rennell: school fees, medical services, construction materials for houses, sports facilities, petrol, etc., which are not accessible for the communities living inside the World Heritage property. As logging and mining activities in West Rennell are likely to continue in the next 10 years<sup>25</sup>, it is clear that local support to preserve the World Heritage property is at a breaking point.



*Tourism to Rennell Island is hampered by lack of access. The single airstrip can only accommodate small planes. The rough road to East Rennell takes about 3 hours from the airstrip, one-way, and does not serve all villages. Transportation infrastructure improvements were the most common request of the local communities.*

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Tourism, albeit not a magical solution, is one alternative due to the splendid nature of the property and the existing basic tourism-infrastructure already present. An inspection of the visitors' book at the lodge in Tegano where the Council of Chiefs meeting was held indicated that tourists had been

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<sup>25</sup> The mining lease started in 2014 and runs for 25 years.

visiting the lake area before the ethnic unrest in the Solomon Islands. However, currently almost no tourists visit the property while a limited number of tourists could already generate a flow of cash sufficient to counterbalance the allure of commercial logging and mining. The mission was surprised to observe that the property, the only World Heritage property in Solomon Islands, is currently not promoted on the website of the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau and is absent from all of the tourist leaflets in several international hotels in Honiara.

The mission also identified the important role played by women in generating income for their families. It is a common activity by women in the four villages to weave baskets and mats using dried leaves of local *Pandanus*. Some women also engage in sawing and dyeing *lavalava* (local cloth) but subject to availability of materials brought from Honiara. While women's clubs exist in each village, weaving and selling products are mostly done individually. Since few tourists visit ERWHP, their products are mostly sold in West Rennell or in Honiara, either through intermediary or by themselves. In the absence of major income generating activities in ERWHP, women are often the main breadwinner of their households to earn cash for food and school fees. However, many women indicated that income generated from weaving is not stable and sufficient, and they expressed their wish to learn "life skills" for capacity building, including on how to run a small business. The potential of adding value to their products by using the World Heritage brand and developing new cash-generating products (e.g. coconut oil produced from some of the world largest coconuts in Rennell) was also explored with groups of women during the mission. They were interested in activities which could increase cash flow to their individual households rather than communal projects.



A basket made from locally available *Pandanus* plant (left). Women in ERWHP learn weaving skills in their childhoods – a girl holding a hand-woven fan (right).

© 2019 Akane Nakamura/UNESCO

The mission notes the terrible condition of the only road connecting the property and its four villages with West Rennell. The condition of the road was one of the primary concerns raised during the meetings of the mission team with the local communities. The terrible condition makes transport from West Rennell to East Rennell very expensive, sometimes even more expensive than the flight from Honiara to West Rennell (Tingoa). Roads are generally in a better condition from Tingoa until Kangava Bay, as they are maintained and heavily used by mining and logging companies.

The property has been isolated not only due to poor infrastructure but the mission also noted their isolation in terms of communication. For example, telecommunication service was totally down for the whole period while the mission was in Rennell except for the last night when telephone service was available at Tingoa before the team departed the island the next morning. There is an “internet-café” in one of the villages, but the price is too expensive for most villagers (SID 5 for 15 min, SID 10 for 1 hour). Radio was available in some of the villages, but no TV in all the four villages. Poor internet connection in particular has been directly affecting the management of the ERWHP by preventing smooth communication between LTWHSa, the SP and WHC.

The mission received several complaints about decreased agricultural activities, requiring local communities to pay for imported food such as rice which they consume daily. Reduced production of taro and vegetables is attributed by local communities to rats, rising lake level, rising lake salinity, pests and/or insects. Also coconut trees are reportedly producing less or even no coconuts. A specialist team who visited the property in 2018 noted that this could be caused by mineral deficiency or an insect/pest eating the floral organs and preventing pollination to occur, rather than due to rats<sup>26</sup>. This is worrying as the property seems to be the origin of the Rennell Island Tall variety, a coconut variety that serves or has served as parent for hybridization programs in many countries.

Several of the above livelihood issues were already addressed in the 2017 national Round Table (16-18 August 2017), and commitments were made by several ministries to prioritize Solomon Islands’ only World Heritage property throughout their respective programs (see Annex VIII). The change in government in November 2017 however interrupted the process, and the commitments did not make it into the timeline and budget of the respective ministries. Following the general elections in Solomon Islands in March 2019, a new timeline and budget with the new governments’ priorities will be prepared in July-August for the next few years.

The mission therefore considers it crucial that:

***Corrective measure (a)***

***The State Party adopt a new Cabinet Paper, prepared by the three Chairs of the 2017 Round Table, reconfirming the 2016 Cabinet Paper, reaffirming all Round Table Ministerial commitments for East Rennell and directing all ministries to provide a concrete timeline and budget for their implementation.***

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<sup>26</sup> Bourdeix, R. 2018. <http://replantcoconut.blogspot.com/2018/03/travel-to-rennell-island-4-6-march-2018.html>



***Corrective measure (c)***

***The State Party ensures that the World Heritage property is actively promoted, including on the website of the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau and on all relevant maps and promotional leaflets, and immediately begin actively promoting appropriate tourism using existing accommodations and facilities.***

The mission further recommends that:

***Recommendation (3)***

***The State Party improves access to the property for tourists and local communities, through an upgraded road from Tingoa to Hutuna, and upgraded Tingoa airstrip, however, ensuring that this would not result in negative impacts on the OUV of the property and following the necessary impact assessment procedures.***

***Recommendation (4)***

***The State Party improves access to basic services and facilities through construction of a telecommunication tower, postal agency, banking agency, medical centre, water and sanitation, sport and recreation.***

***Recommendation (5)***

***The State Party prioritizes the development of sustainable livelihoods for the local communities, recognizing the important role played by women in East Rennell, including through a development plan; and seek long-term technical and financial support from the international community for this effort, including for example through Global Environmental Facilities (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF) and a World Heritage Trust Fund.***

***Recommendation (6)***

***The State Party ensures the Rennell-Bellona Constituency Development Fund reserves an allocation for East Rennell and its local communities.***

### **3.3 Management effectiveness**

Twenty years after inscription and despite numerous requests from the World Heritage Committee, the property still lacks the basic infrastructure to manage the property up to World Heritage standards. It appears that, despite the fact that the property has no dedicated management capacity and no paid staff, the values of the property are still intact and this is primarily because of the traditional / customary management in place and the property's isolation. The growing impact of threats and influences from the West Rennell, the growing population in East Rennell; loss of traditional knowledge and customary governance practices; the communities desire for better transportation and communication infrastructure; and impacts of climate change; all require that management capacity increase.

The LTWHS has no fixed address from which to conduct its affairs and when the Chairperson is asked as to where they hold their meetings he answered "Under the coconut trees". The management of the ERWHP has been unique in this respect. The managers of the site conduct their business from their own homes and in the village green or open areas under the trees.

Although the LTWHSA had managed the site under these trying conditions they have managed thus far to conduct the business affairs of the LTWHSA through the general goodwill of the communities on East Rennell. However, this goodwill is fast eroding as there is now a generation of East Rennellese growing up and yearning for the benefits of development especially when they see benefits in the nearby communities in West Rennell.

As long as there is no management plan and zoning, uncontrolled development is also a threat, not previously identified. For example, in 2018 the construction of a swimming facility on the north shore of Lake Tengano, in preparation for a national competition the Solomon Games was undertaken<sup>27</sup>. The Games were cancelled and the rather large facility sits abandoned, marring an otherwise continuous stretch of forested coast. In order that the OUV of the site is maintained into the future it is vital that a management plan of how the OUV of the site can be maintained is developed and incorporated into any official SIG and community development plans.

The mission recommends that:

***Recommendation (2)***

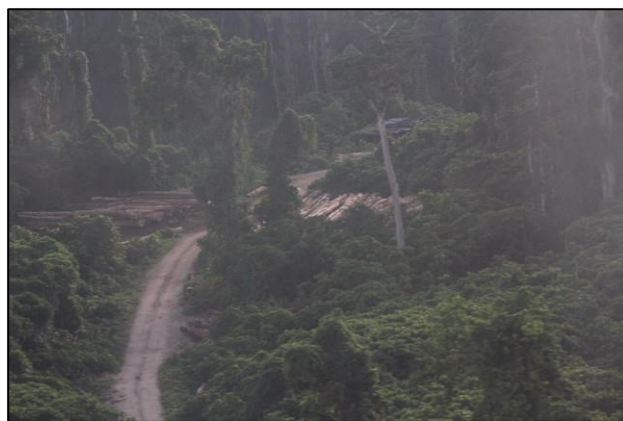
***The State Party provides the LTWHSA with the support needed to manage the property up to World Heritage standards, including an office, technical support (officer from Ministry of Environment or international volunteer), funding to implement the Management Plan, and a public information centre, with the overall aim of making the LTWHSA self-sustaining.***

***Recommendation (9)***

***The State Party ensures that EIAs are carried out for all proposed developments within the property and its vicinity (e.g. road upgrades, tourism accommodation) and in line with IUCN's World Heritage Advice Note on Environmental Assessment and Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines to guarantee that these developments do not have a negative impact on the OUV of the property.***

### 3.4 Logging

The threat to the property from commercial logging is a standing threat. First, there is the possibility of commercial logging inside the property as long as there is no permanent legal mechanism. The Cabinet decision that prohibits logging inside the property and that forbids the issue of Felling Licences by the Ministry of Forests can be changed by a new Cabinet. There is also the possibility that local communities can circumvent the Cabinet decision by having traditional landowners felling their own logs and



*Logging in West Rennell. Raw logs are exported.*  
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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.sibconline.com.sb/renbel-is-ready-to-host-the-solomon-games/>  
<http://www.solomonstarnews.com/index.php/sports/national/item/21215-solomon-games-postponed>

selling them to the logging companies who do not have a “Felling Licence” over the piece of land. It is clear that this type of logging should also be considered as commercial logging.

Second, there is the threat of commercial logging outside the property, which may impact on the OUV of the property. The mission notes that there is currently no substantial scientific information that clearly demonstrates a clear ecological link between East and West Rennell, which could provide the scientific basis to request a complete ban of logging on Rennell Island. However, this is largely because of the lack of scientific studies, especially on avifauna. Monitoring programmes are required to identify endemic birds from East Rennell and their habitat. More research is needed on the ecological linkages between East and West Rennell, also to determine a more appropriate minimum buffer zone for the World Heritage property. While the mission team was informed that current logging operations in West Rennell specifically target Pencil Cedar (*Palaquium spp.*), there are no studies to verify selective logging or to assess impact, and the mission team heard anecdotal reports of clear-cutting.

Furthermore, as the Kangava Bay oil spill demonstrated, the economic activity derived from logging may also have a negative impact on the OUV of the property if something similar occurs in the export of logs and sawn timber from near the LTWHSA.

The mission recommends that:

***Recommendation (7)***

***The State Party develops a scientific research programme at Lake Tegano, seeking support from international research community, also incorporating traditional ecological knowledge, to collect data on, among others: Tilapia stocks, taro cultivation and other agricultural activities, coconut crab over-harvesting, water quality, invasive species, ecological connectivity between East and West Rennell, ecological connectivity between the sea and the lake, forest cover through satellite images, hydrographic survey of the lake, and climate change impacts.***

***Recommendation (8)***

***The State Party continues and expand the recently started bird monitoring program, and seeks international support to mitigate the effects of invasive species, including *Rattus rattus*, on agricultural activities and rare and endemic species.***

### **3.5 Mining**

The Mining Act (section 4) prohibits mining developments on various classes of land including any land used for public purpose. Until the ERWHP is protected under the PAA, there is still a risk that a mining permit may be issued over areas covered by the ERWHP. Now the land can be described as being a public purpose land for the purpose of the Mining Act but the meaning may be general and landowners have always argued that the land in East Rennell are customary land and not public lands.

The mission team considers that there is currently no sufficient scientific information to justify a request to ban all bauxite mining on Rennell Island. It is however critical that the Government closely monitors the bauxite mining which is now happening 12 km away from the boundary of the property.

Furthermore, as the Kangava Bay oil spill demonstrated, the economic activities associated with mining (e.g. shipping) may also have a negative impact on the OUV of the property.

### 3.6 Invasive species

The threat of invasive species (Black Rat, ants, Giant African Snail, Coconut rhinoceros beetle) grows with the increasing ship traffic to the island related to mining and logging activities and the lack of biocontrols in place at ports of entry.

While the 2012 reactive monitoring mission report noted that “Rennell Island is notable in the Pacific region for the absence of rats”, nowadays the presence of rats is obvious throughout the communities of the ERWHP. BirdLife



Rat damage to coconut. © 2019 Brent A. Mitchell

International undertook the first ever invasive species survey in East Rennell during 10 days in July 2018<sup>28</sup> which confirmed that *Rattus rattus* (Black rat) are now established on Rennell Island. The full report of the survey is expected soon, but preliminary results indicate that Black Rat is most numerous in areas of habitation, along coastlines and roads, while the rat was not detected inside large areas of intact forest. The 2018 survey also observed the impact from Black Rats on crops, infrastructure and livelihoods of local communities. Losses to coconuts, taro, kumara, papaya, melons and pumpkins were reported, as was damage to electrical cabling, water lines and contamination of water supplies.

According to BirdLife International<sup>29</sup>, among Rennell’s birds a number of native and endemic species have behaviours that indicate they may be susceptible to the predatory Black Rat. Studies highlight small ground birds and those that nest in holes or the crowns of coconuts or roost at heights of less than 1.5m are particularly prone to Black Rat predation. On Rennell, birds with these behaviours include the island endemics Rennell Starling, Rennell Shrikebill, Rennell Whistler and Rennell Fantail, as well as important populations of Bronze Ground Dove, Australasian Little Grebe, and many species of terns and other seabirds. In addition, Black Rat is a known predator of land snails of which Rennell has many endemic species, as well as invertebrates and reptiles.

The 2012 Reactive Monitoring mission<sup>30</sup> noted that there is also potential for African land snails that have been seen in Honiara to gain access to Rennell Island on shipments of food and other produce, and these aggressive invaders could have a destructive impact on crops and other vegetation and would compete with the 27 species of native land snails. No Giant African Snails have been known to be observed at Rennell Island. The threat of an introduction into Rennell is very high with a lack of biosecurity control at both the airport and sea ports.

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<sup>28</sup> Thanks to a grant from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)

<sup>29</sup> Letter from BirdLife International to the World Heritage Centre, September 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Dingwall, P. 2012. Reactive Monitoring Mission report. Available At <http://whc.unesco.org/document/122248>

Of particular concern is the possible introduction of the Coconut rhinoceros beetle (*Oryctes rhinoceros*) or CRB on Rennell Island. The mission observed a pest alert from the Ministry of Agriculture at the mining barracks in Tingoa. CRB is the most serious insect pest of coconuts and a national CRB state emergency declared in 2017 is still in place<sup>31</sup>. The CRB was mentioned during village consultations as a pest but the mission did not find the tell-tale signs of CRB infestation on the coconut tree leaves.

### **3.7 Over-exploitation of coconut crab and other marine resources**

This mission prioritized community engagement and was not designed for extensive resource assessment. The issue of coconut crab overharvesting was not brought up during community and ministry meetings of the mission. Seventh Day Adventists have a taboo to eat coconut crab, although it is not necessarily followed by all.

One local resident noted that since 2013, and quite abruptly, it has become extremely difficult to find and catch coconut crabs in the forest. Coconut crabs only spend their first month in the marine environment, after which they spend their lifetime in a terrestrial environment. It is possible that the reported decrease in coconut crabs is also related to the introduction of rats that prey on crabs while they are in their juvenile state and at their most vulnerable on the beach.

There have been no population assessments made, and there is no baseline information. Comments were made about the need for rangers to protect from non-residents coming in and taking marine species and crabs, but the extent that this occurs has not been quantified or even verified.

The mission observed an adult coconut crab that was caught the day before.

### **3.8 Climate Change**

The 2012 Reactive Monitoring mission reported that long-time residents estimate the water level in the lake to be 0.8 m higher than in 2002, and that after prolonged rainstorms the lake water level can temporarily rise by 1.5 m, inundating a large extent of the lakeshore. There also seems to be anecdotal evidence that the salinity and temperature of the lake are rising. The issue of climate change was rarely brought up during community meetings and scientific data is rare.

The property may thus need to be mapped geologically and hydrographically to ensure that the impacts of climate change can be identified and mitigated. Such mapping should be aimed at understanding properly the relationships between the lake area and its water source from West Rennell side that is feeding the freshwater springs at Niupani and also the flow of water from the Lake area to the sea.

It has been suggested that cyclone frequency is increasing<sup>32</sup>. The last major cyclone (Nina, 1993) caused extensive damage of villages and forests, and one resident described that “the lake was full of floating dead birds and bats”. The 1997 Nomination Dossier also mentions that people of Rennell relate that a cyclone more intense than Nina occurred between 1898 and 1900, and that after this cyclone, it was said that one could see from end to end of the island.

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<sup>31</sup>Kiddle L., Piper A., Macfarlane B. 2018. Coconut rhinoceros beetle: a huge threat in Solomon Islands and the Pacific. Accessed at 17/06/2019 <http://www.devpolicy.org/coconut-rhinoceros-beetle-huge-threat-solomon-islands-pacific-20181015/>

<sup>32</sup> Dingwall, P. 2012. Reactive monitoring mission report.



Enhancing resilience of ecosystems and livelihoods, including by mainstreaming climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies into the management plan, will therefore become a priority in the future. The property could also benefit from increased adaptive capacity of communities, ecosystems and physical assets in the World Heritage Site to increase resilience in light of climate change and disaster risks.

### 3.9 Customary governance

As discussed earlier in this report, social structures are changing in East Rennell. This, taken with the loss of many cultural activities and traditional knowledge, threatens the underpinnings of customary governance of the site.

The mission verified with the Paramount Chief, Council of Chiefs, and LTWHSA the issue of the letter sent on behalf of the Tuhunui tribe to UNESCO in May 2018. While the letter was revoked, confirmed also when the mission met with the Council of Chiefs (Tegano village, 17 May 2019)<sup>33</sup>, it is clear that competing and contested claims of customary rights among tribes and individual households remain a challenge for the customary governance.

While East Rennell is a natural property, the mission also observed rich cultural values exist in the property, including traditional knowledge some of which are still in practice, genealogies of tribes, and the local Rennellese language. A resident of Hutuna village and a former chairperson of LTWHSA told the mission that it is difficult to find a word equivalent to “nature” in Rennellese (c.f. “*taha taha*” = surrounding environment, “*mouku*” = bush), and nature and culture are inseparable in Rennellese context. While the OUV of the property currently does not include cultural values, the mission considers that it is worth focusing more on their cultural heritage, including intangible heritage, and explore a possible re-nomination of the property as a cultural landscape – a combined work of nature and people which is exactly what ERWHP is.



Children in Tegano Village eating flowers of “wata”, a traditional medicine for diarrhea and other symptoms  
© 2019 Akane Nakamura/UNESCO

<sup>33</sup> Not technically a tribal council meeting in the absence of the paramount chief of East Rennell who is residing in Honiara. Full list of attendees in Annex VI.



Children in Tevaitahe Village excited to find East Rennell in the World Heritage Map  
© 2019 Akane Nakamura/UNESCO



A drawing of ERWHP by a girl from Tevaitahe Village – a cultural landscape where people live in harmony with nature

The mission recommends that:

#### **Recommendation (11)**

***The State Party records and map local culture, traditional and living knowledge, customary governance, genealogies and language of the East Rennell communities while they are still being practiced, with a view of a possible re-nomination of the property, in the long term, as a cultural landscape.***

### **3.10 Oil spill**

On 2 February, the MV Trader Solomon Islands ran aground in Kangava Bay, just 2 km away from the World Heritage boundary<sup>34</sup>. In the following month, almost 80 tons of crude oil spilled in Kangava Bay. SIG requested the support from Australia and New Zealand and thanks to their swift and substantial intervention, a major disaster was averted and no oil seems to have reached the World Heritage site.

During the mission a copy of a first environmental assessment was received. MEDC conducted a 7-day environmental assessment in March 2019 to monitor the oil spill in Kangava Bay and surroundings. No signs of oil contamination of beach and coastline were observed on the southern coast of the property<sup>35</sup>. The mission visually inspected the southern marine coastline of the property (Tuhugago) and observed no oil contamination. During the mission, the MV Trader Solomon Islands was refloated. At the time of the writing of this report, it was unclear if the vessel had already left Rennell Island waters or not.

<sup>34</sup> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1948/>

<sup>35</sup> Solomon Islands State Party Report. 2019. Summary available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/document/173688>

The mission was told by senior government officials that the oil spill was due to an unfortunate accident that could not have been avoided by plans.

The mission notes it is important to continue monitoring the impact, including socio-economic implications for communities in East Rennell.

The mission notes it could be appropriate to take measures to avoid a similar incident in the future, especially in light of potentially growing maritime traffic (including cruise ships and potential construction of cruise wharf) and the reported increase in cyclone frequency.

### **3.11 Boundaries**

The mission notes the confusion that exists on the actual boundaries of the World Heritage property, both in terms of geographical coordinates and customary ownership, and both the actual boundary and land ownership within the property.

The 1997 Nomination Dossier specifies that “The coordinates where the ward boundary meets the coast to the north are: 160°20'34"E and 11°39'52"S. The coordinates where the ward boundary meets the coast to the south are: 160°18'15"E and 11°43'06"S (see Map 2).” This map (See figure 1) is the only map of the property currently available at the World Heritage Centre. Yet if those coordinates are plotted, they are not situated on the coast, and the line that connects them is about 650 m to the west of the line as indicated on the map. This difference might be important as it would mean that parts of Kavanga Bay are part of the property, and especially in light of the most recent logging application up to 200 m to the west of the property’s boundary.

There is also confusion as up to where goes the actual boundary of the World Heritage property based on custom, and several cases have been discussed at the Local Customary Court. The mission saw several maps with a different boundary / different attribution of land to tribes.

The mission notes that disputes over land might discourage future investors. One example provided during the mission is a dispute over who owns the land on which a telecommunication tower was to be built, and thus who is entitled to receive the lease from the telecommunication company. Instead of settling the dispute internally, the involved parties sent letters to the telecommunication company in Honiara, which consequently put the project on hold. It is imperative that the SIG set up a formal system whereby customary owners and local communities find a way to settle their disagreements among themselves. The mission considers that the registration of lands could avoid land disputes in the future. Registration of lands would also be required prior to any type of offsetting projects such as REDD+<sup>36 37</sup>. While almost no land in Solomon Islands has been registered and surveyed so far, the Registration of Customary Lands Act foresees the modalities. If not all of East Rennell could be surveyed, priority should be given to the western shore of the lake where most people live and where initial tourism lodges should be clustered.

The mission recommends that:

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<sup>36</sup> See also Stanley S. A., 2013. REDD Feasibility Study for East Rennell World Heritage Site, Solomon Islands. Available at:

[https://theredddesk.org/sites/default/files/resources/pdf/eastrennell\\_draftfeasibilityreport\\_2013.pdf](https://theredddesk.org/sites/default/files/resources/pdf/eastrennell_draftfeasibilityreport_2013.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> The 2013 REDD feasibility study for ERWHP states that, “...demonstrating clear legal tenure on customary lands is problematic in the Solomon Islands since the process is ambiguous, at best. “



#### **Recommendation (10)**

***The State Party considers registering and surveying all lands in the World Heritage property under the Registration of Customary Lands Act, prioritizing the western shore of the lake where most people live and where initial tourism lodges should be clustered.***

#### **4 ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE PROPERTY**



*Southern shoreline and view at Tuhugago beach, looking East*  
© 2019 Brent A. Mitchell

Lake Tegano is a prominent feature of the property. Its undisturbed forest, avifauna and capacity as a true natural laboratory for scientific study make it globally unique. Despite threats, lack of adequate legal protection and inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, the ecosystems of the inscribed property appear to remain largely intact. However, any assessment of the state of conservation is hampered by a lack of baseline information on species abundance in any part of the property.

A 2016 analysis using satellite images found that undisturbed forest cover in the property is well over 95% of land area within the property and that no logging has occurred within the property<sup>38</sup>. The 5% of land area with disturbed forest cover is primarily in the vicinity of the four villages on the western lakeshore and used for subsistence agriculture, and likely has not changed greatly in scale or location since inscription. A quick scan of the boundary and buffer strip by drone found no logging activity as yet.

Though the mission did not test water quality the Lake is very clear, even near settlements, suggesting a lack of pollution. Eastern areas of the Lake were not visited but

reports are that the area receives little use or even no visitation.

Visual inspection of the southern marine coastline found no modification and the area presents as pristine. Full evaluation of impacts of the MV Solomon Trader are still pending but it appears that quick response by international assistance and salvage operators averted contamination of the property.

It remains to be seen if habitat disturbance due to rapid resource extraction on West Rennell will affect species diversity and abundance on the East Rennell property. The terrestrial component (e.g., non-lake area) of East Rennell represents approximately one-third of the land area of the small (660km<sup>2</sup>) island. The de facto World Heritage property's buffer "zone" is set at only 200 meters along the western, straight-line boundary of the Site. This buffer zone derives from the logging regulations and is not an official World Heritage buffer zone as such.

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<sup>38</sup> Mengmeng Wang, Guojin He, Natarajan Ishwaran, Tianhua Hong, Andy Bell, Zhaoming Zhang, Guizhou Wang & Meng Wang (2018): Monitoring vegetation dynamics in East Rennell Island World Heritage Site using multi-sensor and multi-temporal remote sensing data, International Journal of Digital Earth, DOI: 10.1080/17538947.2018.1523955

## 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The OUV of the East Rennell World Heritage property is intact due largely to three factors: 1) the isolation of Rennell Island; 2) customary management and conservation ethic of the people living there; and 3) the promise of livelihood improvement based on conservation over exploitation. All three contributing factors are in danger. Though in general the Solomon Islands are isolated—travel is expensive, and the country ranks dead last on the KOF Index of Globalization<sup>39</sup>—Rennell Island has been discovered by foreign extractive industries (export of raw logs and bauxite), particularly in the past five years. Customary management structures appear to be changing and morphing to a hybrid community/private land tenure system. Frustration over the lack of benefits of tourism development and other livelihood improvements in the 20 years since inscription is testing the conservation resolve of local people.

It is the considered opinion of the mission team that the ERWHP should remain on the List of World Heritage in Danger until such time as a) adequate legal protection is secured, b) an adequate management plan, including geo-referenced zoning, is accepted, c) boundary issues are resolved and demarcated, d) the LTWHSA has demonstrated sufficient capacity and authority to fulfil its role as management authority, and e) livelihood and ecotourism initiatives are implemented sufficiently to maintain local support for conservation, all in line of the current DSOCR. However, the current timeframe to reach the DSOCR by 2021 might not be realistic.

The mission recommends that:

### ***Recommendation (12)***

***The State Party considers assessing, in the 2020 State of Conservation Report, if the current timeframe for implementing the Desired State of Conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) by 2021 is realistic, and if not, to request an extension to the World Heritage Committee.***

To adequately protect the OUV and integrity of the property while enhancing livelihoods of local communities, the mission suggests the following corrective measures as a matter of urgency:

- a) Adopt a new Cabinet Paper, prepared by the three Chairs of the 2017 Round Table, reconfirming the 2016 Cabinet Paper, reaffirming all Round Table Ministerial commitments for East Rennell and directing all ministries to provide a concrete timeline and budget for their implementation;
- b) Ensure that the Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association (LTWHSA) can officially and immediately apply for National Protected Areas status for the World Heritage property in order to initiate the official consultation process by the Director of the Environment and Conservation Division, and to finalize the Management Plan (including zoning);
- c) Ensure that the World Heritage property is actively promoted, including on the website of the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau and on all relevant maps and promotional leaflets, and immediately begin actively promoting appropriate tourism using existing accommodations and facilities.

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<sup>39</sup> GlobalEdge Country Memo 2018

The mission also makes the following recommendations to the State Party:

- 1) In order to facilitate the designation of the property under the 2010 Protected Areas Act, clarify the consent provision of the Act, particularly as it pertains to the 'interested parties' who would need to be involved in the process (see Section 10, subsection 7 c);
- 2) Provide the LTWHSA with the support needed to manage the World Heritage property to international standards, including an office, technical support (an officer from Ministry of Environment or an international volunteer), funding to implement the Management Plan, and a public information centre, with the overall aim of making the LTWHSA self-sustaining;
- 3) Improve access to the property for tourists and local communities by upgrading the road from Tingoa to Hutuna and upgrading the Tingoa air strip, while ensuring that this does not result in negative impacts on the OUV of the property and follows the necessary impact assessment procedures;
- 4) Improve access to basic services and facilities through construction of a telecommunication tower, postal agency, banking agency, medical centre, water and sanitation, and sport and recreation facilities;
- 5) Prioritize the development of sustainable livelihoods for the local communities, recognizing the important role played by women in East Rennell, including through a development plan; and seek long-term technical and financial support from the international community for this effort, including for example through Global Environmental Facilities (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF) and a World Heritage Trust Fund;
- 6) Ensure the Rennell-Bellona Constituency Development Fund reserves an allocation for East Rennell and its local communities;
- 7) Develop a scientific research programme at Lake Tegano, seeking support from the international research community and also incorporating traditional ecological knowledge, to collect data on: Tilapia stocks, taro cultivation and other agricultural activities, coconut crab over-harvesting, water quality, invasive species, ecological connectivity between East and West Rennell, ecological connectivity between the sea and the lake, forest cover through satellite images, hydrographic survey of the lake, and climate change impacts;
- 8) Continue and expand the recently started bird monitoring program, and seek international support to mitigate the effects of invasive species, including *Rattus rattus*, on agricultural activities and rare and endemic species;
- 9) Ensure that EIAs are carried out for all proposed developments within the property and its vicinity (e.g. road upgrades, tourism accommodation) and in line with IUCN's World Heritage Advice Note on Environmental Assessment and Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines to guarantee that these developments do not have a negative impact on the OUV of the property, in conformity with ;
- 10) Register and survey all lands in the World Heritage property under the Registration of Customary Lands Act, prioritizing the western shore of the lake, where most people live and where initial tourism lodges should be clustered;
- 11) Record and map local culture, traditional and living knowledge, customary governance, genealogies and language of the East Rennell communities while they are still being practiced, with a view of possibly re-nominating the property, in the long term, as a cultural landscape;
- 12) Consider assessing, in the 2020 State of Conservation Report, whether the current timeframe for implementing the Desired State of Conservation for the Removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) by 2021 is realistic and, if not, requesting an extension from the World Heritage Committee.

## 6 ANNEXES

**Annex I:** Terms of reference

**Annex II:** Committee **Decision 42 COM 7A.41**

**Annex III:** Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR)

**Annex IV:** Mission programme

**Annex V:** Composition of the mission team

**Annex VI:** List of people met during the mission

**Annex VII:** 2016 Cabinet Paper

**Annex VIII:** 2017 Round Table report

**Annex IX:** IUCN Protected Area Management Category VI



*Bare-eyed white-eye, Woodfordia superciliosa, one of many species endemic to Rennell Island.*

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **Joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission East Rennell (Solomon Islands)**

The World Heritage Committee, at its 42nd session, requested the State Party of Solomon Islands to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the World Heritage property 'East Rennell' (Decision **42 COM 7A.41**). The objective of the monitoring mission is to assess the current state of conservation of the property, including progress made with the implementation of the corrective measures and towards the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR). The mission will be conducted by Robbert Casier and Akane Nakamura representing the World Heritage Centre, and Brent Mitchell and an expert from the IUCN Oceania Regional Office representing IUCN.

In accordance with Decision **42 COM 7A.41**, the mission should undertake the following:

1. Assess the current state of conservation of the property and the progress achieved towards combatting threats identified in previous state of conservation reports, including invasive species, bauxite mining and logging as well as other relevant conservation issues, including the most recent oil spill accident that occurred near the property, that may negatively impact on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property in line with paragraph 173 of the Operational Guidelines, including its conditions of integrity and protection and management;
2. To provide advice to the State Party regarding possible measures which can be implemented in order to achieve the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR), in close consultation with local communities and customary land owners,
3. To facilitate a dialogue between and amongst different stakeholders/communities and to evaluate how the concerns expressed by the customary land owners can be addressed, whilst fully respecting their right to self-determination;
4. Explore possible ways of developing sustainable livelihoods for the customary owners of the property, in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, and put forward recommendations to the World Heritage Committee and the international community.

The State Party is requested to facilitate and accompany any necessary field visits. In order to enable the smooth preparation for the mission, the following items should be provided to the World Heritage Centre (copied to IUCN) as soon as possible, and no later than 1 month prior to the mission:

1. All information available in response to the letters from the World Heritage Centre concerning the petition from the Tuhunui Tribe (dated on 16 May 2018) and logging (dated on 13 September 2018);
2. All documentation available on the results of the Round Table organized on 16-18 August 2018.

3. Any other relevant information (recent ecological monitoring reports, management plans, etc.)

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

The mission should hold consultations with the authorities at the national level, including Ministries that are part of the inter-ministerial task force to lead the implementation of the DSOCR, namely,

- Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Conservation, Disaster Management and Meteorology;
- Ministry of Forestry;
- Ministry of Culture and Tourism;
- Ministry of Education (UNESCO National Commission);
- Ministry of Infrastructure Development;
- Ministry of Mines and Energy – Water Resource Unit;
- Ministry of Aviation and Communication – Aviation;
- Prime Minister's Office

The mission should also hold consultations with the authorities at provincial and local levels (including paramount chief, council of chiefs, village chiefs and family chiefs). In addition, the mission should consult with all other relevant stakeholders, including i) Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association; ii) church leaders; iii) NGOs and individuals supporting the local communities; and iv) other UN and international organizations. In particular, the mission will place a greater emphasis on the dialogue with local communities, including four communities located within the property, namely, Tevaitahe, Niupani, Tegano and Hutuna, in order to develop constructive and concrete solutions to remove the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger by 2021 (Decision **41 COM 7A.19**).

Based on the results of the above-mentioned assessments and discussions with the State Party representatives and stakeholders, the mission will develop recommendations to the State Party and the World Heritage Committee with the objective of providing guidance to the State Party on actions to be taken to ensure the effective conservation/management of the property and its Outstanding Universal Value. It should be noted that recommendations will be provided within the mission report (see below), and not during the mission.

The mission will prepare a concise report on the findings and recommendations within six weeks after the site visit, following the World Heritage Centre Reactive Monitoring mission report format.

**Decision: 42 COM 7A.41**

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/18/42.COM/7A.Add2,
2. Recalling Decision **41 COM 7A.19**, adopted at its 41st session (Krakow, 2017),
3. Regrets that the State Party did not submit a report on the state of conservation of the property, as requested by the Committee;
4. Notes with utmost concern the letter submitted to the World Heritage Centre by the Tuhunui Tribe of East Rennell, raising serious concerns on the practical modalities of customary ownership, management and decision-making, and expressing their wish to “withdraw all its customary land from the World Heritage Program Site in East Rennell” in light of their concern that they are not benefiting from its World Heritage status, and their opposition to the property being declared under the Protected Area Act 2010;
5. Considers that the long term conservation of the property’s Outstanding Universal Value can only be secured with the full consent of the customary land owners and land users in full respect of their rights;
6. Also considers that the development of sustainable livelihoods for the local communities is of utmost importance, requests the State Party to seek technical and financial support to address this issue and calls upon the international community to support the State Party with this effort;
7. Also requests the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property:
  1. to facilitate a dialogue between and amongst different stakeholders/communities and to evaluate how the concerns expressed by the customary land owners can be addressed, whilst fully respecting their right to self-determination,
  2. to provide advice to the State Party regarding possible measures which can be implemented in order to achieve the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR), in close consultation with local communities and customary land owners,
  3. to assess the current state of conservation of the property and the progress achieved towards combatting threats identified in previous state of conservation reports, including invasive species, bauxite mining and logging;
8. Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2019**, 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 43rd session in 2019;
9. **Decides to retain East Rennell (Solomon Islands) on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**

### Annex III: Desired State of Conservation

#### Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR)

*Adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 41<sup>st</sup> session (July 2017) (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/3516>).*

#### Proposed timeframe for implementation

A timeframe of 4 years is proposed for achieving the DSO CR, starting upon its adoption by the Committee. This timeframe should enable the State Party to commence an extensive rat monitoring and/or eradication program (with international support), as well as to determine baselines for forest cover, as outlined in the indicators and their rationale below.

		INDICATOR FOR REMOVAL OF THE PROPERTY FROM THE LIST IN DANGER	RATIONALE	METHOD OF VERIFICATION
ATTRIBUTES	1	Forest cover in the property is maintained measured against the 2013 baseline (time of inscription on the Danger List)	<p>Maintaining forest cover is essential for the conservation of the site's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), especially with regard to the unmodified forest vegetation and avifauna for which the site was inscribed under criterion (ix) on the World Heritage List.</p> <p>Logging and mining reduce forest cover and threaten important forest habitat that is utilized by avifauna, and represent a material loss of natural values and protection within the property, thus directly impacting the reason for inclusion on the World Heritage List.</p>	<p>Satellite images determining the 1998 (time of inscription) and 2013 (time of inscription on Danger List) baseline for forest cover.</p> <p>Periodical analysis of satellite images indicating the current forest cover measured against the baseline.</p> <p>Adoption of a legal mechanism that would provide for application of the Protected Areas Act 2010 and the Rennell-Bellona Province Lake Tegano Heritage Park Ordinance 2009 to East Rennell, thus banning all logging and mining in the property.</p>



INTEGRITY	2	Any extractive activities in West Rennell (logging, mining) are managed in a way that would prevent any negative impact on the OUV of the property and its integrity	Unsustainable logging and mining operations on Rennell Island have the potential to directly and indirectly impact on the OUV of East Rennell through habitat fragmentation and degradation especially near the boundary of the property. Some scientific research suggests that the forests on East Rennell are not large enough to remain ecologically functional without the forests on West Rennell. More scientific research is urgently required to determine the critical forest areas in West Rennell that support the ecological functioning and the integrity of the property and the conservation of its OUV. The results of this research will also help policy makers with the development of a sustainable forest management framework in West Rennell in time and space.	<p>Development of a 1998 (time of inscription) and 2013 (time of inscription on Danger List) baseline for forest cover.</p> <p>Periodical analysis of satellite images indicating the current forest cover measured against the baseline.</p> <p>Critical forest areas in West Rennell that support the ecological functioning of East Rennell are identified based on sound science, and these areas are excluded from ecologically damaging activities, such as logging and mining.</p> <p>Legal mechanism(s) regulating approval processes for any sustainable forest and mining activities in West Rennell and their management have been established, based on the ecologically critical areas described above.</p> <p>The Code of Practice is applied to existing logging leases in Rennell Island until their completion and no activity that has the potential to impact the OUV of the property is permitted, unless ESIA has indicated that it will not create a negative impact on the property, and the necessary actions specified in the ESIA to prevent such damage are implemented.</p>
	3	Threats to the OUV of the property from already introduced invasive species have been identified and minimized and biosecurity measures have been	The black rat is among the most widespread invasive vertebrates on islands and continents (Shiels et al., 2013). It survives well in human dominated environments, natural areas, and islands where humans are not present. <i>Rattus rattus</i> is typically the most common invasive	Assessment on the impact and extent of the distribution of invasive rats ( <i>Rattus rattus</i> ) on Rennell Island, and in particular on the OUV of the property.

		<p>established to prevent new introductions</p>	<p>rodent in insular forests (Shiels et al., 2013). Few vertebrates are more problematic to island biota and human livelihoods than <i>R. rattus</i>; it is well known to damage crops and stored foods, kill native species, and serve as a vector for human diseases (Shiels et al., 2013). The black rat is an omnivore, yet fruit and seed generally dominate their diet, and prey items (including eggs and hatchlings) from the ground to the canopy are commonly at risk and exploited as a result of the prominent arboreal activity of black rats. It is likely that there have been multiple introductions of black rats (and potentially other species) into West Rennell via the ocean-going barges that originally came from China and now process logs through Honiara Port, where black rats are common. Rats have been observed by local communities inside the World Heritage property.</p> <p>The accidental introduction of the Giant African Land Snail (<i>Achatina spp.</i>) into Rennell Island is considered to be a serious potential threat to the OUV of the East Rennell World Heritage site and also to food security on the island. Considered one of the 100 world's worst invasive alien species, intense concern is raised due to its adverse impact on agriculture, human health and native fauna (Vogler et al., 2013); moreover, once established this snail is impossible to eradicate.</p> <p>More research is urgently required to understand the population dynamics of invasive rats (presence, population density, current distribution, rate of spread) and its impact on the OUV of the property. A full eradication of black rats on Rennell Island will be very difficult because of its large size (Shiels et al., 2013),</p>	<p>Effective activities to minimize the impact of already introduced invasive species, especially via the eradication of rats, are underway, adequately funded and showing positive results (eg., rat eradication program with international support and working closely with local people and relevant state and provincial government personnel, ...).</p> <p>Effective biosecurity measures are fully operational at places of disembarkation on Rennell Island (airport, seaport, log ponds) to prevent the accidental introduction of invasive species (eg., rats, snails, ants, plants) on Rennell island.</p>
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			therefore research will help to identify next steps and potential international support.	
	4	Coconut crab and other marine resources are harvested in a sustainable manner based on traditional resource use regimes	<p>The people of East Rennell harvest crayfish, giant clam, trochus (sea snail) and reef fish for consumption and for sale. Beche-de-mer (sea cucumber) was a key resource for income generation until a national ban on its export was imposed in 2005, which shifted the pressure to trochus. Coconut crabs, which are important for subsistence use and as a source of cash income, are harvested year-round. Crabs have disappeared from the western part of Rennell Island, and within the property the harvesting success rate is dropping, raising concerns that increased harvesting pressure may lead to localised extinction of the species. Harvesting of marine resources is essentially unregulated and traditional conservation measures have been supplanted by a more commercial approach. For coconut crab there are no community-based controls on target animals or on harvesting levels, times or durations (IUCN mission report, 2012).</p> <p>Controls on harvesting of marine resources and coconut crabs are urgently required, including restrictions on the number and size of animals harvested, prohibition of taking pregnant females or eggs, and imposition of seasonal limits and no-take zones. A return to traditional conservation measures should be encouraged. This should be accompanied by research, survey and monitoring along with training and awareness-raising in the local community (IUCN mission report, 2012).</p>	<p>Adoption and enforcement of restrictions on harvesting levels for coconut crab (number and size of animals allowed to be harvested), establishment of no-take zones and imposition of seasonal restrictions, through the revised Management Plan for the property or another mechanism.</p> <p>Population data for coconut crab and other key indicator species (to define) compared to baseline data (to be collected, relative to a date as close as possible to the date of inscription on the World Heritage List).</p>

MANAGEMENT	5	<p>The management plan for the sustainable management of the property has been officially adopted and is being implemented</p>	<p>A management plan would integrate the development needs of the local communities with the priorities of protecting the OUV of the property. Completing and adopting the management plan, with consent of the customary owners, will strengthen the actions and rules of the management plan, especially those that relate directly to the Protected Area Regulations and as such would be enforced through the Protected Areas Act.</p> <p>Without continuous financial and technical support, the decisions made by the Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association and the objectives of the management plan cannot be implemented on the ground. Once continuous support is available for basic activities, extra sources of funding for specific projects could be more easily attracted from a wide variety of sources.</p> <p>Without a viable income-generating alternative for mining and logging, it could be difficult for local communities to continue to support the sustainable conservation of the World Heritage property. Climate change has already resulted in decreased food security and increased dependency on imported food for which cash money is necessary thus increasing the need for cash income even more in the short term.</p>	<p>The new management plan has been endorsed by the Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association.</p> <p>The Solomon Islands Government has allocated funding for the implementation of the management plan.</p> <p>The Solomon Islands Government has adopted an Action Plan to prioritize East Rennell and its local communities, and to develop alternative income generating mechanisms that derive benefits from the conservation of the property's OUV.</p>
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## Annex IV: Mission Programme

### MISSION PROGRAMME

#### **Friday 10 May**

16:30-17:30 Meeting at JICA office (Japanese Development Agency)  
19:00-21:00 Meeting with UN Resident Coordinator / UN colleagues  
(UNDP, UN-OCHA, WHO)

#### **Saturday 11 May**

17:00-19:00 Preparatory meeting among the WHC/IUCN mission team  
19:00-22:00 Dinner and meeting with LTWHSA (Chairperson and Vice-chairperson) and Trevor Maeda (World Heritage Focal Point, Ministry of Environment)

#### **Sunday 12 May**

15:30-16:30 Meeting with people from East Rennell currently living in Honiara  
18:00-21:30 Meeting with Paramount Chief of East Rennell, Mr. Niuman Tegheta

#### **Monday 13 May**

09:00-10:00 Meeting with Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development, meeting with UNESCO National Commission  
10:15-11:00 Meeting with Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Traditional Governance Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs  
11:20-12:30 Meeting with Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources  
13:20-14:30 Meeting with Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Culture and Tourism  
14:40-15:10 Meeting with UNDP SGP  
15:30-16:30 Meeting with Director of Conservation, Ministry of Environment

#### **Tuesday 14 May**

06:00-7:00 Flight from Honiara to Tingoa (Rennell)  
12:30-13:30 Meeting with Bintan Mining Company Rennell Operations Manager in Tingoa  
Travel from Tingoa to East Rennell – stop at post-mining sites in West Rennell, a bauxite dumping site in Kangava Bay and Abataihe Village (a bordering village) to see the re-floated MV Solomon Trader → 3 hour drive and a boat trip to Hutuna  
19:00 Arrival at Hutuna Village

#### **Wednesday 15 May**

09:00-12:00 Meeting with Hutuna Village (community meeting + village elders)  
14:00-17:00 Meeting with Tegano Village (community meeting + village elders)

#### **Thursday 16 May**

10:00-12:00 Meeting with Niupani Village - men and women's groups

13:00-16:00 Meeting with Tevaitahe Village – men and women’s groups

**Friday 17 May**

09:30-11:30 Meeting with Council of Chiefs

15:30-18:00 Meeting with LTWHSA

**Saturday 18 May**

09:30-14:30 Walk to Tuhugago Bay with local guides (State of Conservation)  
(Drive to West Rennell)

18:00-19:00 Meeting with Abataihe Village (a bordering village)

21:30 Arrival in Tingoa

**Sunday 19 May**

08:45-09:45 Flight from Tingoa (Rennell) to Honiara

15:00-16:00 Meeting with Live & Learn Environmental Education (NGO)

16:00-19:00 WHC/IUCN Team meeting

19:00-21:00 Meeting and dinner with Mr. Frank Wickham, Resource  
mobilization advisor LTWHSA

**Monday 20 May**

08:00-09:30 Meeting with Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Environment

10:00-12:00 Debriefing Meeting with line Ministries and NGOs

12:30-13:30 Lunch with Ministry of Education / Solomon Islands National  
Commission for UNESCO

14:00-14:20 Meeting with Ministry of Infrastructure Development

14:00-15:00 Meeting with Solomon Islands National Museum

14:30-15:45 Meeting with Australia and New Zealand High Commissions

16:00-17:00 Meeting with Ministry of Education/NatCom

16:00-17:00 Meeting with JICA – Ministry of Forest & Research Project

18:00-21:00 Meeting with UNDP Country Manager

**Tuesday 21 May**

10:30-12:00 Team meeting at Honiara Airport



#### Annex IV: Composition of Mission Team

### **COMPOSITION OF MISSION TEAM**

#### **World Heritage Centre**

Robbert Casier (Associate Programme Specialist, Marine Programme)

Akane Nakamura (Junior Professional Officer, Asia and the Pacific Unit)

#### **IUCN**

Brent Mitchell (Chair of IUCN-WCPA Specialist Group on Privately Protected Areas and Nature Stewardship)

Ifereimi Dau (Programme Officer, Climate Change Mitigation & Risk Reduction, IUCN Oceania Regional Office)

#### **Solomon Islands Government**

Trevor Maeda (World Heritage Focal Point, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Metrology)

Sophie Liligeto (Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development / Solomon Islands National Commission for UNESCO )

Teddy Kafo (Communication Officer, Government Communication Unit, Office of the Prime Minister & Cabinet)

## **LIST OF PEOPLE MET DURING THE MISSION**

### **Solomon Islands Government**

Dr. Melchior Mataki (Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Metrology)

Mr. Joe Horokou (Director of Environment, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Metrology)

Mr. Trevor Maeda (World Heritage Focal Point, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Metrology)

Mr. Franco Rodie (Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development)

Ms. Christina Bakolo (Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development / UNESCO National Commission)

Ms. Sophie Liligeto (Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development / UNESCO National Commission)

Mr. Justus Denni (Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Traditional Governance Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs)

Dr. Christian Ramofafia (Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources)

Mr. Edward Honiwala (Director, Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources)

Mr. Andrew Nihopara (Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Culture and Tourism)

Mr. Trevor Veo (Chief Civil Engineer, Ministry of Infrastructure Development)

Mr. Teddy Kafo (Communication Officer, Government Communication Unit, Office of the Prime Minister & Cabinet)

### **People from East Rennell (including those based in Honiara)**

#### **LTWHSA**

Mr. George Tauika (Chairperson, LTWHSA)

Mr. Patrick Moana (Vice-chairperson, LTWHSA)

Mr. Frank Wickham (Resource Mobilization Advisor, LTWHSA / former Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Metrology)

Ms. Loreta Tefuke (Treasurer, LTWHSA)

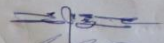
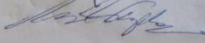

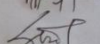
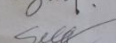
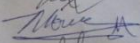


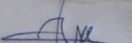
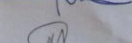

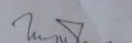



Ms. Zanya Teika (Women representative, LTWHSA)

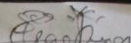

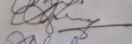
and other members

## Paramount Chief

Mr. Niuman Tegheta (Paramount Chief)

Council of Chiefs (or their representatives attended the meeting on 17 May 2019)

NAME	VILLAGE	TRIBE	SIGNATURE
Paul Jack	TEVATATE	NEPEGI	
George Teuka - Hutuna	Hutuna	Tekongahena	
Joseph Sau - Hutuna	Hutuna	Vagatakuge	
William Kauga - Hutuna	Hutuna	Hangagaa	
Saul Magumamao - Hutuna	Hutuna	Giimata	
AREA TAIEHA - Hutuna	Hutuna	Tepisinga	
Evan Moana - Hutuna	Hutuna	TeaGima-Nuku	
Daniel Kastui - Tebitake	Tebitake	Agnisaga	
Eric Soika - Tegano	Tegano	Kagivi	
<del>Joe Tapatua</del> - Tegano	<del>Tegano</del>	<del>Tuhunui</del>	<del></del>
Fred Temoa - Tegano	Tegano	Tuhunui	
Moses Tegheta - Niupani	Niupani	Tehakatuhi	
Eric Pua - Niupani	Niupani	Tehakatuhi	
Owen Tuhenua - Niupani	Niupani	Tehakatuhi	
Joe TAPAKA - Niupani	Niupani	Tehakatuhi	

Joe Kaipua - Niupani	Fawa Tribe	
John Tana - Tegano	Tehakagaba	
Eric Pua - Niupani	Teak Tribe	

## People from East Rennell based in Honiara

Name	Village	Tribe
① Vince Tigaki Tegano	Tegano	Tehakugava
② Alphons Tema-Tegano		
③ Don Sabago Tego	Tegano	Kayavi Tribe
④ Thompson Teka	Tebantabo	Napegi Tribe
⑤ Randy Kaipua	TEGANO HUTUNA	
⑥ SHITUA	NIUPANI	
⑦ Patrick	NIUPANI	TUTUNUI
⑧ George Tawika	Hutuna	Tekongahewa

### UN

Ms. Anna Chernyshova (Country Manager a.i., UNDP)

Ms. Vini Talai (UN-OCHA)

Dr. Sevil Huseynova (WHO Representative for Solomon Islands)

Mr. Josiah Maesua (National Coordinator, UNDP-SGP)

### NGO

Ms. Elmah Panisi Sese (Country Manager, Live & Learn Solomon Islands)

### International donors

#### JICA

Mr. Motoyuki Uegaki (Resident Representative, JICA Solomon Islands Office)

Mr. Shitau Miura (Assistant Representative, JICA Solomon Islands Office)

Dr. Tatsuji Nishikawa (Chief Advisor/Forest Policy, JICA Project on Capacity Development for Sustainable Forest Resources Management)

Ms. Maho Miura (Project Formulation Officer, JICA Solomon Islands Office)

Ms. Shimako Narahara (Socio-economic Analysis/Community Development Organisational Enhancement 2, JICA)

### **Australia High Commission**

Mr. Roderick Brazier (Head of Mission, Australian High Commission (AHC))

Ms. Sally-Anne Vincent (Deputy Head of Mission, AHC)

Ms. Lucy Bechtel (AHC)

Ms. Deltina Solomon (AHC)

Mr. Howard Lawry (Advisor, Public Solicitor's Office (PSO))

Mr. Dirk Heinz (Landowners Advocacy and Legal Support Unit, PSO (volunteer))

### **New Zealand High Commission**

Mr. Don Higgins (Head of Mission, New Zealand High Commission (NZHC))

Ms. Hannah Van Voorthuysen (Deputy Head of Mission, NZHC)

### **Other Stakeholders**

Mr. Allen Hu (Bintan Mining Company Rennell Operations Manager)

**DATE: 2/09/16**

**6. THE EAST RENNELL WORLD HERITAGE**

**(c) The Cabinet:-**

A	NOTED	In Danger Status of ERWHS and the underlying factors of its status
B	APPROVED	The Pipeline of initiatives
C	DIRECTED	MECDM To consult with the landowners including LTWHA and relevant stakeholders to register the ERWHS as a protected Area.
D	DIRECTED	MCT to revive its development assistance to ERWHS through an inclusive sustainable community – integrated tourism development program packaged for ERWHS.
E	ENDORSED	The improvement of road access and upgrading of the Tingoa airstrip in West Rennell for immediate implementation
F	DIRECTED	The Ministry of Infrastructure Development to provide technical and funding support for road improvement and airstrip development.
G	DIRECTED	The Commissioner of Forest and Minister of Forestry and Research to revoke and or refuse granting any Felling license within all the area at East of Rennell of the World as Heritage Site as per the map kept at Ministry of Environment , Climate change, Disaster Management & Meteorology and more particularly the northern border described As 160° 20' 34" E-11 "39'52"; and southern boundary 160°18'15"E-11 "43'6"S.

<sup>40</sup> Source: 2017 State of Conservation report. Available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/document/157240>





# **Lake Tengano World Heritage Site 2017 Round Table Dialogue Honiara Hotel**

## **REPORT**

Date: 16 -18. August 2017

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## 0.1. Executive Summary

The 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention unites nations behind a shared commitment to preserve the world's outstanding heritage for the benefit of present and future generations. It recognizes that the protection of these exceptional places is the duty of the international community as a whole and it ensures that the preservation of these special sites becomes a shared responsibility.

Lake Tengano are truly special; it is part of a prestigious collections of extraordinary places that the international community has pledged to protect. There are currently 1073 UNESCO World Heritage sites; and East Rennell is Solomon Islands only World Heritage site.

In its meeting on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017, World Heritage Committee has adopted the road map for the removal of East Rennell from the List of World Heritage in Danger! This is a crucial step towards the eventual removal of East Rennell from the Danger List. As soon as major progress is made with the implementation of the road map, the Committee can consider to remove East Rennell from the Danger List!

Calls upon the international community to provide support to the State Party (Solomon Islands) in its efforts to implement the Desired State of Conservation and (DSOCR) and to develop sustainable livelihoods for the customary owners of the property;"

Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations.

## 2.0. Introduction

2.1. The Round table is a proof of the SIG commitment to protect East Rennell for future generations.

The East Rennell World Heritage Site is by far the only World Heritage Site in the Country and the Melanesian region and after the Cabinet approval on the paper to revive and renew the Government's commitment to developing this national asset, it is important that all relevant stakeholders are brought together for this discussion forum.

The Roundtable meeting is necessary to bring together relevant Government stakeholders, East Rennell community stakeholders, RENBEL Provincial Government, potential interested development partners, and other key Government institutions to discuss on directions of way forward and how best the Government, the Provincial Government and people of Rennell and Bellona can work together to execute any planned program for the Site.

The Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Ministry of Education and Human Resource development co-hosted the East Rennell World Heritage Site Roundtable Meeting.

The objectives of the ERWHS Roundtable meeting are:

- a. *Discuss the implementation of the Roadmap for East Rennell's biodiversity (the Desired State of Conservation to remove East Rennell from the List of World Heritage in Danger – DSOCR);*
- b. *Discuss the Roadmap for East Rennell's communities (how to develop alternative income generating mechanisms that derive benefits from the conservation of the East Rennell World Heritage site, for the benefit of the local communities);*
- c. *Secure collect commitments from all national stakeholders involved;*
- d. *Present to international community "the way forward" and the commitment of local communities and Solomon Islands Government (secure international community to support ongoing initiatives for East Rennell).*

## 3. Meeting Opening – Formalities

1. Lake Tengano World Heritage Site Round Table dialogue was held at Honiara Hotel Skyboard Conference Room in Honiara on 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> August 2017. The meeting was officially opened by Hon Samuel Manetoali, Minister of Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology with the presence of 20 representatives from Government Ministries, 10 representatives from Non-Government Organisations, 8 representatives from Renbel Provincial Executives and 42 delegates from Lake Tengano Communities of which 10 are Honiara based. A total of 80 participants attended the Round Table meeting.
2. In his opening remarks, Hon Manetoali welcomed the representatives of Lake Tengano thanked them for their contributions to protect the only World Heritage Site of Solomon Islands. He recognized the important role of Lake Tengano Association as a bridge between Solomon Islands Government, Provincial Government and UNESCO and wished this cooperative relationship be taken forward and further strengthened. He stressed that the Government of Solomon Islands and its stakeholders have a shared responsibility for enhancing the capacities of all stakeholders. To this end, the SIG Core Team for Lake Tengano World Heritage Site which was recently established would do its utmost to contribute to strengthening its mandate and will ensure that it coordinate with the key Ministries responsible to implement projects.

### 3.0. Round table presentations including deliberations in the meeting.

#### 3.1. Session One: Setting the Context and Panel Discussions

**Presentation was done by Director Tourism. The following were highlighted;**

- 3.1.1. Establishment of SIG Core Team of Lake Tengano World Heritage Site. Members are different SIG
- 3.1.2. Cabinet Paper approval on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2016 which directed responsible Ministries to implement some development plan needed by people of Rennell. ( See annex 5)
- 3.2. Panel questions asked by Moderator include the following;
  - i. “What’s the current issue experienced in Lake Tengano?
  - ii. Is the Solomon Islands Government, Provincial Government of Renbel Province and people of Lake Tengano communicating?
  - iii. What can we do better?”

Given the need to openly dialogue over current issues of Lake Tengano, the following issues were discussed.

- The call for and support for the RENBEL Provincial Ordinance for the protection of the East Rennell WHS by LOs, Legal Reps and also Provincial Government
- The issue of renewed political will towards the ERWHS has been welcomed – but acknowledge the lack of benefits and attention was frustrating over the last 20+ years
- There is lack of a Development Master Plan for the ERWHS and the Management Plan needs to be finalized
- Capacity building of the East Rennell people is vital and UNESCO is seen as a key partner for this undertaking – this can be in the form of scholarships on conservation but specifically for East Rennell people. MEHRD alluded to the new proposed system where 8 scholarships will be allocated to each constituency but will be based on Merits

- There were talks about current traditional practices already in place but needs to be formalized through community by-laws
- It was recommended a cohesive multi-stakeholder approach is required to improve communication and commitments towards the development and protection of the ERWHS
- There must be considerations for community incentives in order to secure the commitment of the communities and LOs
- The cabinet conclusion to revoke and reject any felling licenses in East Rennell must be upheld and adhered to

**Panel discussion was moderated by Mr Andrew Nihopara, PS Culture and Tourism and Co-chair of the Round Table Dialogue. Panelist members include the following officers representing Seven (7) Solomon Islands Government Ministries.**

Ministry of Conservation, Environment represented by Mr Joe Horokou, Director Conservation  
 Ministry of Education and HRD represented by Dr Franco Rodie, Permanent Secretary, MEHRD  
 Ministry of Culture and Tourism represented by Mr Bunyan Sivoro (Director, Tourism)  
 Min Ministry of Forestry represented by Mr.....  
 Ministry of Infrastructure represented by Mr.....  
 Prime Minister's Office - Mr Chris Veke, Policy Advisor  
 Ministry of Aviation represented by Mr Alwyn Danitofea (Director Communication)

#### **Key Issues highlighted by Participants**

1. *Livelihood of the ER people through economic activities that hinges on the WHS*
2. *There is lack of assistance program in the last 20 years for the area*
3. *Question about who is the state player in the whole development agenda*
4. *Protection mechanism*

#### **Panel member's responses:**

1. MID confirmed its commitment to upgrade, maintain and build the necessary infrastructures on Rennell island – particularly in executing the Cabinet conclusions in the interest of the ERWHS
2. Surveys must be carried out in order to technically assess the infrastructure requirements, proper costing and securing the necessary budget
3. MCT captured the potential for tourism development in line with the WHS status and potential for collaboration with other key ministries for a development package for ER
4. MECDM put forward the option for the Declaration of the WHS under the Protected Areas Act with options to devise a relevant management plan
5. MFMR alluded to fisheries projects in the ocean and also within the lake as conservation approach but at the same time developing economic livelihood projects for the communities in Tilapia farming, Coconut Crab farming and controlled harvesting. Their livelihood project options in Tourism, Agriculture, Aquaculture and the used of FADs for ocean fishing

#### **4:0. Session 2: Presentation prepared by UNESCO on Lake Tengano Status and Current Situation of Lake Tengano Communities.**



4.1. Presentation by UNESCO/IUCN East Rennell World Heritage Site: History/ Danger listing/ future opportunities.

4.2. Discussion DSO CR: current situation & what's needs to be done/ how can this be done to remove LTWHS removed from danger.

Presentation was done by Chairperson of Lake Tengano

#### **4.3. Question and answer / Discussion**

4.3.1. TNC raised key issues about why is ER Lake Tengano is a WHS and a National Asset. Issues includes:

- I. What is the value of ERWHS?
  - a. Raised atoll status
  - b. Largest in-land lake in the region
  - c. Endemic species
- II. Raised concerns about the extractive industries of logging and mining, which might infringe on the requirements for world heritage site
- III. Questions were raised about how effective will the protection mechanism if declared Protected Area and who will be responsible

#### **5:0 Key Recommendations**

- a) Development of Tourism development in Lake Tengano
- b) Provincial Ordinance need to be finalised
- c) Lake Tengano World Heritage Site Act to be developed
- d) LT Management Plan to be developed but aligning to the Law and/or Provincial Ordinance
- e) Biennial Round Table
- f) Managing coconut crabs harvesting and SIG to ensure there is alternative projects for Livelihood sustainability
- g) Possible to control Invasive species like Rats, Cormorant but needs SIG to assist financially.
- h) Assessment of threats need to be done by UNESCO or any Organisation Management need to be finalised and agreed to by LT communities/villages, LTWHS Committee, Provincial Government and SIG

#### **6: 0. Proposed Development Plan**

6:1. Development Plan developed on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2017 in Honiara Hotel. Agreed and approved during the meeting.



Outcome	Recommendation	ment ?				
1. Legislative and Policy Framework for World Heritage Site(E.g. Protected Areas Act, )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National World Heritage Act</li> <li>- Finalisation and Approval of Renbel Provincial Ordinance</li> <li>- Work towards legal mechanism to protect East Rennell under Protected Areas Act</li> </ul>	Yes	MECDM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SIG Core Team</li> <li>- LTWHS</li> <li>- Renbel PS</li> <li>- Chair-CC</li> </ul>	end of December 2018	Explore the process of Protected Areas Act and other legal machenisms
2. Refinement and endorsement of Management Plan would be the key outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completion of Management Plan</li> <li>- <b>Note: approval process at Association, Provincial and Cabinet</b></li> </ul>	Yes	LTWHS-Association - MECDM	MCT SINCUC	Mid 2018	The Target date could be subjected to the process of the PA Act
3. Mechanism of Coordination , partnership and implementation ( endorsement of a working Structure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify and formalise governance and management bodies to oversee the protection and management of Lake Tengano. The following are nominated;</li> <li>- Council of Chiefs</li> <li>- LTWHS Association</li> </ul>	Yes	- SIG Core Team	Live and Learn SINCUC LTWHS-Association	1-3 months	<b>Note. MECDM responsibility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Consultation with Youth and Women Responsibility must be done</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- World Heritage Committee</li> <li>- NGOs (local and Int'l ) involved in LTWHS Activities</li> <li>- Prov Govt</li> <li>- SIG</li> </ul>					separately
4. Strengthening the Mandate of the Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To Review the constitution of Association</li> <li>- Stock take the capacity of Association members</li> <li>- Device a resourcing mechanism for the Association</li> <li>- Monitoring and Evaluation</li> </ul>	Yes	SIG Core Team MECDM Association	NGOs locally and Int'l	Mid 2018	
5. Resourcing Commitment to Lake Tengano WHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Progressing Round Table Outcomes</li> <li>- Funding for improvement of Road (access from Tingoa to Hutuna) and upgrading of the Airstrip in West Renbell for immediate implementation.</li> <li>- Subject to completion and approval of</li> </ul>	Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes	SIG Core Team MID, MCA SIG Core, LTWHS Association, Prov Govt MCT MID MID	PMO, Cabinet DPs DPs DPs DPs/ MoF NGO's	2018 and onward	

	Management Plan	Yes	SIG Core Team	MCA		
		Yes				
	- MCT to revive its development assistance to ERWHS through an inclusive sustainable community-integrated tourism development program packaged for ERWHS	Yes	SIG Core Team	DPs, Constituency,		
		Yes	Prov Govt, Telekom, MID	DPs,		
		Yes	MEHRD /MP	DPs		
		Yes	MLHS , Prov Govt, Los/ER MCT MHMS			
	- MID directed to provide technical and funding support for road improvement and airstrip development ( East Rennell Airstrip)		MEHRD			
	- International Wharf /cruise ship					
	- Increasing sources for sustainable funding					
	- Identify livelihood projects for East Rennell					
	- Telecommunication Tower for East Rennell					

	<p>- note - follow up needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scholarships</li> <li>- Acquire land for LTWHS Association Office</li> <li>- Tourism masterplan</li> <li>- Upgrade clinic</li> <li>- School infrastructure</li> </ul>					
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#### 7.0: SIG Core Team Way Forward

10.1.1. Identify management plans specific to the LTWHS Development program

10.1.2. Action plan/ Core activities

10.1.3. Agree on Development plans specific to the LTWHS - SIG core team planning with LTWHS

## Annex IX: IUCN Protected Area Management Category VI

### **Category VI: Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources**

Protected areas that conserve ecosystems and habitats, together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems. They are generally large, with most of the area in a natural condition, where a proportion is under sustainable natural resource management and where low-level non-industrial use of natural resources compatible with nature conservation is seen as one of the main aims of the area.

#### **Primary objective**

To protect natural ecosystems and use natural resources sustainably, when conservation and sustainable use can be mutually beneficial.

#### **Other objectives**

- To promote sustainable use of natural resources, considering ecological, economic and social dimensions;
- To promote social and economic benefits to local communities where relevant;
- To facilitate inter-generational security for local communities' livelihoods – therefore ensuring that such livelihoods are sustainable;
- To integrate other cultural approaches, belief systems and world-views within a range of social and economic approaches to nature conservation;
- To contribute to developing and/or maintaining a more balanced relationship between humans and the rest of nature;
- To contribute to sustainable development at national, regional and local level (in the last case mainly to local communities and/or indigenous peoples depending on the protected natural resources);
- To facilitate scientific research and environmental monitoring, mainly related to the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources;
- To collaborate in the delivery of benefits to people, mostly local communities, living in or near to the designated protected area;
- To facilitate recreation and appropriate small-scale tourism.

#### **Distinguishing features**

Category VI protected areas, uniquely amongst the IUCN categories system, have the sustainable use of natural resources as a means to achieve nature conservation, together and in synergy with other actions more common to the other categories, such as protection.

Category VI protected areas aim to conserve ecosystems and habitats, together with associated cultural values and natural resource management systems. Therefore, this category of protected areas tends to be relatively large (although this is not obligatory).

The category is not designed to accommodate large-scale industrial harvest.

In general, IUCN recommends that a proportion of the area is retained in a natural condition, which in some cases might imply its definition as a no-take management zone. Some countries have set this as two-thirds; IUCN recommends that decisions need to be made at a national level and sometimes even at the level of individual protected areas.

## Role in the landscape/seascape

Category VI protected areas are particularly adapted to the application of landscape approaches.

This is an appropriate category for large natural areas, such as tropical forests, deserts and other arid lands, complex wetland systems, coastal and high seas, boreal forests etc. – not only by establishing large protected areas, but also by linking with groups of protected areas, corridors or ecological networks.

Category VI protected areas may also be particularly appropriate to the conservation of natural ecosystems when there are few or no areas without use or occupation and where those uses and occupations are mostly traditional and low-impact practices, which have not substantially affected the natural state of the ecosystem.

## What makes category VI unique?

Allocation of category VI depends on long-term management objectives and also on local specific characteristics. The following table outlines some of the main reasons why category VI may be chosen in specific situations vis-à-vis other categories.

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Category VI differs from the other categories in the following ways:

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Category Ia	Category VI protected areas do conserve biodiversity, particularly at ecosystem and landscape scale, but the aim would not be to protect them strictly from human interference. Although scientific research may be important, it would be considered a priority only when applied to sustainable uses of natural resources, either in order to improve them, or to understand how to minimize the risks to ecological sustainability.
Category Ib	Category VI protected areas in certain cases could be considered close to “wilderness”, however they explicitly promote sustainable use, unlike the situation in category Ib wilderness areas where such use will be minimal and incidental to conservation aims. They also contribute to the maintenance of environmental services, but not only by exclusive nature conservation, as the sustainable use of natural resources can also contribute to the protection of ecosystems, large habitats, and ecological processes.
Category II	Category VI protected areas aim to conserve ecosystems, as complete and functional as possible, and their species and genetic diversity and associated environmental services, but differ from category II in the role they play in the promotion of sustainable use of natural resources. Tourism can be developed in category VI protected areas, but only as a very secondary activity or when they are part of the local communities' socio-economic strategies (e.g., in relation to ecotourism development).
Category III	Category VI protected areas might include the protection of specific natural or cultural features, including species and genetic diversity, among their objectives, whenever the sustainable use of natural

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	resources is also part of the objectives, but they are more oriented to the protection of ecosystems, ecological processes, and maintenance of environmental services through nature protection and promotion of management approaches that lead to the sustainable use of natural resources.
Category IV	Category VI protected areas are more oriented to the protection of ecosystems, ecological processes, and maintenance of environmental services through nature protection and promotion of the sustainable use of natural resources. While category IV protected areas tend to prioritize active management, category VI promotes the sustainable use of natural resources.
Category V	Category V applies to areas where landscapes have been transformed as a result of long-term interactions with humans; category VI areas remain as predominantly natural ecosystems. The emphasis in category VI is therefore more on the protection of natural ecosystems and ecological processes, through nature protection and promotion of the sustainable use of natural resources.

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### Issues for consideration

Protection of natural ecosystems and promotion of sustainable use must be integrated and mutually beneficial; category VI can potentially demonstrate best management practices that can be more widely used.

New skills and tools need to be developed by management authorities to address the new challenges that emerge from planning, monitoring and managing sustainable use areas.

There is also need for development of appropriate forms of governance suitable for category VI protected areas and the multiple stakeholders that are often involved. Landscape-scale conservation inevitably includes a diverse stakeholder group, demanding careful institutional arrangements and approaches to innovative governance.

Dudley, N. (Editor) (2008). *Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. x + 86pp. WITH Stolton, S., P. Shadie and N. Dudley (2013). *IUCN WCPA Best Practice Guidance on Recognising Protected Areas and Assigning Management Categories and Governance Types*, Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 21, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. Pages 22-23 ISBN 978-2-8317-1636-7

### *Examples of Category VI Protected Areas in the South Pacific*

Taveuni Forest Reserve, Fiji

Erromango Kauri Forest Conservation Area, Vanuatu