

KENYA LAKE SYSTEM IN THE GREAT RIFT VALLEY (KENYA)

(N1060REV)

STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT, 2024

1. Executive Summary of the report:

This State of Conservation (SOC) report is on the Kenya Lake System in the Great Rift Valley (Kenya) (N 1060rev); a World Heritage Property that comprises of three sites; the Lake Bogoria, Lake Elmentaita and Lake Nakuru, inscribed in 2011.

The report is in response to the Decision 45 COM 7B.7 of the World Heritage Committee adopted at its 45th Session in Riyadh, (Saudi Arabia) on 10 -25 September 2023

As reported previously, the State Party has strengthened the protection of the property and adjoining areas through the deployment of site managers and other law enforcement personnel and accompanying resources to the three components of the property, required for effective conservation and management of the ecosystem under which the property occurs. The rising lake water levels phenomenon previously reported on has remained a going concern not only in the property but also the other Kenya Rift Valley lakes. Enforcement of national environmental laws and monitoring of negative impacts has been enhanced to control developments in ecologically sensitive areas within and outside the property and the wider ecosystem.

A project – *Safeguarding Kenya Lake System's Unique Ecological Gem* funded by the Government of Netherlands has been developed for implementation in 2025 to address this Decision and so a comprehensive reporting will be done in 2025 to the 47th Session of the WHC

2. Response to the Decision 45 COM 7B.7 of the World Heritage Committee

Decision by World Heritage Committee

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/23/45.COM/7B,
2. Recalling Decisions **39 COM 7B.5, 41 COM 7B.21, 43 COM 7B.33** and **44 COM 7B.175** adopted at its 39th (Bonn, 2015), 41st (Krakow, 2017), 43rd (Baku, 2019) and extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021) sessions respectively,
3. Expresses its utmost concern about the impacts of the continuous water level rise in all the lakes of the property, causing changes in the boundaries, pH and salinity

of the lakes and resulting in adverse impacts on biodiversity, in particular the alarming decline of Lesser Flamingo population, a key attribute of the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);

Response by State Party

The rise in lake water levels both in the property and in the other Kenya Rift valley lakes has persisted and is still not fully understood as to the cause of these changes. There has been no much intervention especially on boundary surveys and markings as the situation has not stabilized to a level that a long lasting intervention can be made. It however should be noted that, the changes experienced are within historical natural variations of all the Rift valley lakes. The lakes have had periods of rise and fall through historical times.

4. Encourages the State Party of Kenya, with the support of Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania, to undertake a joint survey to better understand changes within the Lesser Flamingo populations in the East African Rift and develop a Lesser Flamingo Action Plan for the region, in cooperation with the IUCN/SSC Flamingo Specialist Group;

Response by State Party

The State Party jointly with UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa and with funding support from the Government of Netherlands (Netherlands Fund-in-Trust-NFiT) is in the process of implementing a project beginning in 2025- Safe guarding Kenya Lake System's Unique Gem to establish the status of the lesser flamingo populations and behaviour in the property and other wetland habitats suitable for lesser flamingos

The data and information collected through the project will be shared and inform finalization of a national Action Plan for Lesser flamingo in Kenya (currently in draft) and the engagement with Ethiopia and United Republic of Tanzania for development of a lesser Flamingo Action Plan for the region will be explored.

Under the framework of the Agreement on the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), the State Party has designated a Lesser flamingo technical expert as a national focal point to the AEWA Working Group for Lesser flamingo. The Expert is leading in the NFiT project in establishing the conservation status of the lesser flamingo populations and habitats in the property and other sites in Kenya and will be the country technical lead when engaging Ethiopia and United Republic of Tanzania on the survey of the species populations in the region.

5. Recalls that at the time of inscription, the World Heritage Committee in its Decision **35 COM 8B.6** encouraged the States Parties of Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, and other relevant States Parties, to cooperate regarding the effective conservation of Lake Natron and other lakes in the region, and to consider further potential serial extensions as part of a potential transnational serial World Heritage property;

Response by State Party

It is planned that, the outcome of the implementation of the activities under the NFiT project will support efforts for the engagement with other relevant State Parties especially United Republic of Tanzania towards nomination of a transnational serial World Heritage property

6. Notes the results of the scoping report conducted by the multi-agency team on the impacts of the rising lake water levels, and encourages the State Party to implement the study recommendations, including resurveying the riparian zones, beaconing the new boundaries, continued monitoring of the site, relocating or rehabilitating the sewage treatment plants near Lake Nakuru and other lakes, raising awareness on the impacts of climate change as well as establishing buffer zones while at the same time taking urgent actions, in close collaboration with local communities, to address deforestation and land degradation in the basin and especially in the Mau escarpment;

Response by State Party

Most of the recommendations from the report of the Multi agency team have been implemented. These include government engagement with Management of the energy Power companies about mitigating against electrocution and collision of birds with the power lines and finalization of the Management Plan for the Lake Elementaita Wildlife Sanctuary (LEWSE). However, as stated earlier, interventions on boundary surveys and markings must be delayed as the situation has not stabilized to a level that a long lasting intervention can be made. Moreover, changes experienced are within historical natural variations of all the Rift valley lakes. The lakes have had periods of drastic rise and fall through historical times.

7. Appreciates the State Party's discussions with stakeholders towards securing a wildlife corridor between Lake Nakuru and Lake Naivasha using wayleaves and creating a task force, developing a concept note and a work plan, but considers that the site selection and design of the wildlife corridor should be based on an evaluation of relevant needs of specific species to allow the potential corridor to accommodate movement of each target species, and therefore also requests the State Party to provide more information on this concept;

Response by State Party

The wildlife corridor concept was a probable consideration but this position has since been suspended. The establishment a wildlife corridor between Lake Nakuru and Lake Naivasha cannot be tenable as this would have serious ramifications on the settled communities who have been living in the area for since late 1800s.

Moreover, this would not add any value to the OUV of the property which is majorly birdlife flyway. The considerations for establishment of wildlife corridors are long term and require consultations and at multiple levels of stakeholders. The focus by the State Party for now in the property is the improvement of critical habitats of the Lesser Flamingo and other threatened species to ensure protection of the OUV of the Kenya Lake System.

8. Also notes that a meeting was organized in 2020 in Naivasha to agree upon the coordination of the management of the three components of the property, and further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre a report of follow up actions made to implement its decisions;

Response by State Party

The State Party has continued conducting synchronized birdlife (waterfowl) surveys in the three lakes, an exercise that has been going for over 30 years. The survey results are well documented for management purposes. These surveys are conducted with the collaboration of the Kenya Wildlife Service, the National Museums of Kenya and the County governments of Baringo and Nakuru. One of the result of the coordination of management of the property has been the review of Lake Elementaita Management Plan that finalized in 2023. The process brought together the collaboration of the management authorities of the three lakes. The NFIT project will again bring together all the stakeholders for the three components together as agreed under the coordinated management framework of 2020.

9. Further noting that the rising lake water levels affected the zonation scheme of the property, which will be reviewed once the lake levels subside, reiterates its request to the State Party to develop and implement regulations to prohibit developments in close proximity to fragile areas and sensitive buffer zones of the property;

Response by State Party

As previously reported, there is established, A Multi-agency Taskforce coordinated by the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Forestry to address the Socio-economic, humanitarian and ecological challenges that have arisen from increase in the lake water levels. Some of the measures deployed include enforcement of environmental laws and regulations relating to approval of infrastructural

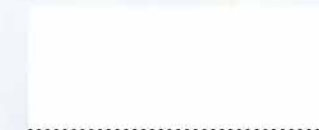
developments and the requirement for Environmental Impact Assessments for projects that are out-of-character

10. Strongly regrets that the State Party did not halt the Olkaria-Lessos-Kisumu power transmission project, which passes along Lake Elmentaita, and has now been energized, notwithstanding concerns remain for the potential impact of the project on the OUV of the property, and urges the State Party to report on the status of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) mission including its recommendations if available, monitor bird mortalities along the powerline and to report on mitigation measures and their effectiveness to limit bird mortality;

As previously reported by the State Party, the high voltage power-line project, the Olkaria-Lessos –Kisumu passes 5 kilometers away from the Lake Elmentaita, one of the three components of the property. This clarification has been given to the World Heritage Committee. Further, the State Party has reported that Multi- agency Rapid Ecological Assessments are being carried out regularly to monitor bird mortalities along the powerline and as appropriate cause to be deployed, mitigation measures to limit the mortalities

11. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2024**, 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 47th session.

3. Signature of the Authority



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Fredrick Manthi PhD, EBS
Director Antiquities Sites & Monuments

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13 December 2024