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CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD  
CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

CONVENTION CONCERNANT LA PROTECTION DU PATRIMOINE  
MONDIAL, CULTUREL ET NATUREL

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE / COMITE DU PATRIMOINE MONDIAL

Thirtieth session / Trentième session

Vilnius, Lithuania / Vilnius, Lituanie  
08-16 July 2006 / 08-16 juillet 2006

Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda: State of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Point 7 de l'Ordre du jour provisoire: Etat de conservation de biens inscrits sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial.

**JOINT UNESCO/WHC-ICOMOS-IUCN EXPERT MISSION  
REPORT /  
RAPPORT DE MISSION CONJOINTE DES EXPERTS DE  
L'UNESCO/CPM, DE L'ICOMOS ET DE L'IUCN**

Mount Athos (Greece) (454) / Mont Athos (Grece) (454)

30 January – 3 February 2006/ 30 janvier – 3 février 2006

This mission report should be read in conjunction with Document:  
Ce rapport de mission doit être lu conjointement avec le document suivant:

☐ WHC-06/30.COM/7A

☐ WHC-06/30.COM/7A.Add

☒ WHC-06/30.COM/7B

☐ WHC-06/30.COM/7B.Add

**REPORT ON THE JOINT MISSION UNESCO – ICOMOS- IUCN  
TO MOUNT ATHOS, GREECE,  
FROM 30 JANUARY TO 3 FEBRUARY 2006**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The mission would like to express its thanks to Fathers Aghios Protos Pavlos (Chair of Holy Community), Ephraim (Abbot Vatopedi), Arsenios (Deputy Abbot Vatopedi), Tychon (Abbot Stavronikita), Natanaeli (Abbot Iviron), Christophorus (Secretary Iviron), Anthonius (Responsible for Buildings and Forests Iviron), Prodromos (Abbot Lavra), Nicodimos (Megisti Lavra), Ioannis (Chief Secretary Lavra), Elisseus (Abbot Simonopetri), Nilos (Deputy Abbot Simonopetri), Methodiou (Responsible for restoration work Chilandari), Mr. Aristos Kasmiroglou (Deputy Governor of Mt. Athos), M. Isidoros Kakouris (Director of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Antiquities), M. Ioannis Tavlakis (Director of 10<sup>th</sup> Ephorate of Byzantines Antiquities), Christos Limenopoulos (President KEDAK), Eftychia Alexandridou (Director EKBY), George Albanopoulos (Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works) and Stergios Fotiou (Business Architects).

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The World Heritage Committee at its 29th session requested the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to undertake a mission to the Mount Athos, to assess the state of conservation of the property (29COM 7B.32). Specific concerns to be addressed in assessing the state of conservation of the site including its integrity and authenticity, included:

- Assessing the impacts of the consolidating, cleaning and restoration efforts following the 2004 fire at the Chilandari Monastery and any on-going (EU funded) restoration projects on the World Heritage values of the property;
- Assessing any threats to the chestnut forest surrounding the monasteries from timber extraction, logging and infrastructure development; Following deforestation and degradation in the mountainous terrain, erosion and landslides could threaten the property;
- Assessing any large (EU funded) infrastructure projects on road developments between monasteries, which might threaten landscape values;
- Assessing the progress made in preparing the requested risk preparedness study, including seismic risk preparedness, for all of the 20 monasteries on the Holy Mount, in order to systematically reduce the likelihood of fire elsewhere, and possibility of any other threats;
- Development of an overall management strategy for the World Heritage property, which would address both natural and cultural values, and provide a common framework for action among the 20 monasteries on the property;

The mission team was constituted of Christian Manhart, UNESCO World Heritage Centre; Thymio Papayannis, IUCN; Herb Stovel, ICOMOS, and accompanied by officials working within the Greek government in various heritage conservation roles: Isidoros Kakouris, Director of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Antiquities, Christos Limenopoulos (President KEDAK) and Ioannis Tavlakis, Director of 10<sup>th</sup> Ephorate of Byzantines Antiquities. The mission visited the following places during the period Jan. 30 – Feb. 4, 2006:

- Karyes, government seat of Mount Athos. Official meetings with the Chair of Holy Community and the Governor of Mount Athos.
- Visit to the Protaton Church
- Monastery of Vatopedi (also overnight stay)
- Monastery of Stravronikita
- Monastery of Iviron (also overnight stay).
- Monastery of Great Lavra
- Monastery of Simonos Petras (including overnight stay).
- Monastery of Chilandari.

The mission confirmed that in spite of threats to the outstanding universal value of the site, relatively low standards of risk preparedness in place, and uncoordinated planning among monasteries, and the impact of European Union Funds, the outstanding universal value of Mount Athos is not threatened at the present time.

The principal general recommendations of the mission are the need to:

- prepare, approve and implement an integrated and multi-disciplinary management plan for the entire area of Mt. Athos, which should take into account the co-existence of nature and spirituality / culture in Mt. Athos since the end of the first millennium, the legitimate needs of the Monastic Brotherhoods, circulation and transportation network of Mt. Athos, integrated and sustainable management of the natural environment (including forests and the larger cultural landscape), resolution of the problem of solid and liquid wastes, and management of risks, especially of fires and earthquakes, and the importance of developing a consistent approach to conservation decision-making from monastery to monastery.
- Increase involvement of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works in the assessment, approval and implementation of the Mt. Athos management plan.

Specific recommendations address the need to:

- Improve ecological sustainability of forest management, and exploration of means to reduce commercial exploitation
- Improve approaches to road construction and maintenance
- Improve measures for waste management
- Ensure compliance on the part of the State Party of requests previously made by the World Heritage Committee concerning risk management including *reporting on consolidation, cleaning operations and restoration of the Chilandari Monastery*, and preparation of a *risk preparedness study, including seismic preparedness, for all 20 monasteries on the Holy Mount, in order to systematically reduce the likelihood of fire elsewhere, and possibility of other threats*.
- Suggest that the State Party prepare a series of training workshops, in collaboration with the Advisory Bodies to strengthen the risk preparedness capacity of individual monasteries.
- Ensure follow up on earlier requests by the World Heritage Committee that the European Union be urged to ensure its projects do not negatively impact the outstanding universal value of the property.

## **1 BACKGROUND TO THE MISSION**

### **Inscription History**

The Bureau at its 12<sup>th</sup> Session, Paris 14-17 June 1988, recommended inscription of this site. Moreover, it requested that IUCN communicate to the December 1988 session of the Committee its evaluation of the natural aspects of Mt. Athos.

### **Report of 12<sup>th</sup> Session of the World Heritage Committee, Brasilia 5-9 December 1988**

#### **XIV/II. Nominations of cultural properties**

Mt. Athos, Greece, C(i)(ii)(iv)(v)(vi) N(iii)

The Committee accepted the ICOMOS proposal to add natural criterion (iii) - outstanding universal value from the point of view of natural beauty - to cultural criteria, since this site involves a humanized landscape, the characteristics of which are due to persistence of farming practices and traditional arts and crafts linked to the stringent observance of monastic rules.

### **Inscription Criteria and World Heritage Values**

The site was inscribed under criteria C (i) (ii) (iv) (v) (vi)

- **Criterion II.** Mount Athos exerted lasting influence in the orthodox world, of which it is the spiritual centre, on the development of religious architecture and monumental painting. The typical layout of Athonite monasteries (mentioned below to illustrate criterion IV) was used as far away as Russia. Iconographic themes, codified by the school of painting at Mount Athos and laid down in minute detail in the Guide to Painting (discovered and published by Didron) were used and elaborated on from Crete to the Balkans beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

- **Criterion IV.** The monasteries of Athos present the typical layout of orthodox monastic establishments: a square, rectangular or trapezoidal wall flanked by towers, which constitutes the peribolus of a consecrated place, in the centre of which the community's church, or the catholicon, stands alone. Strictly organized according to principles dating from the 10<sup>th</sup> century are the areas reserved for communal activities (refectory, cells, hospital, library), those reserved solely for liturgical purposes (chapels, fountains), and the defense structures (arsenal, fortified tower). The organization of agricultural lands in the idiorhythmic sketes, the kellia and kathismata (farms operated by monks) is also very characteristic of the medieval period.

- **Criterion V.** The monastic ideal has, at Mount Athos, preserved traditional human habitations, which are representative of the agrarian cultures of the Mediterranean world and have become vulnerable through the impact of change within contemporary society. Mount Athos is also a conservatory of vernacular architecture and agricultural and craft traditions.

- **Criterion VI.** In 1054, the sacred mountain of Athos, a holy place in the Christian world, became the principal spiritual home of the Orthodox Church. It retained this prominent role even after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the establishment of the autocephalous patriarchy of Moscow in 1589. Mount Athos is directly and tangibly associated with the history of Orthodox Christianity which, in varying degrees, is present in more than 20 nations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is no exaggeration to say that this thousand-year old site, where the weight of history is palpable in the countryside, the monuments and the precious collections collected slowly over time, has retained even today its universal and exceptional significance.

### **IUCN evaluation report at 21 December 1988**

*“Our conclusions on the World Heritage natural values of Mt. Athos are similar for both the Meteora and Pamukkale nominations. The natural features of all these sites provide the setting which attracted settlement and the building of religious structures in historic times. All, thus, have natural features which form an important backdrop for a cultural landscape which now represents the dominant values.*

*Mt. Athos itself, though scenic, is not exceptional or outstanding on a global scale. There are no unique geological features and it is not of particular importance for its scientific values of species. The flora has, however, been well-protected and contains a variety of plant species now becoming rare in the region. The natural features of Mt. Athos, therefore, do not complement the cultural values as strongly as they do in Goreme, Mt. Taishan, or Machu Picchu.*

*Finally, as in our evaluation of the Lake District nomination, IUCN is hesitant regarding the use of the phases in the Operational Guidelines concerning “man’s interaction with his natural environment” and “exceptional combinations of natural and cultural elements” as these more correctly fall under Article 1 of the Convention.”*

### **Examination of the State of Conservation 2003**

Following the recent ICOMOS Committee meeting on mural paintings organised by ICOMOS Greece, the World Heritage Centre received some information about restoration works being carried out in the World Heritage Site of Mount Athos.

The World Heritage Centre by letter of 28 August 2003 asked the Greek Delegation to give more information about the following points:

- The current restoration works being carried out;

- The implementation of the preservation programme by the Greek Ministry of Culture, through the Tenth Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities;
- The eventual development of an overall management plan, which includes the natural part of this mixed site.

The World Heritage Centre also recalled that it has received, over the past years, several reports from IUCN and other NGOs about threats to the natural environment of Mount Athos.

## 2004

The World Heritage Committee at its 28<sup>th</sup> session in Suzhou, China (July, 2004):

28COM 15B.37

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Notes with concern damages at the property by the devastating fire at the Chilandari Monastery;
2. Expresses its solidarity with the State Party and the orthodox community of the Monastery;
3. Requests the State Party to inform the World Heritage Centre on the current state of conservation of the property and the measures taken to minimise the damage by 1 February 2005, for consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 29th session in 2005;
4. Urges the State Party to develop an overall management plan for the World Heritage property, which includes the natural values.

## 2005

The Greek authorities provided a report on efforts to respond to the fire on 31 January 2005. This report documented the scale of the destruction (exceeding 10,000 square meters of lost surface) and the restoration funds necessary (in the order of 30,000,000 Euros). The report also described immediate efforts to mitigate the fire: protective fencing, and photogrammetric documentation to help estimate extent of damage internally and externally. Consolidation and shelter works totalling approximately 1,000,000 Euro have been carried out through the end of the winter of 2004-2005. Further consolidation and cleaning operations are planned in 2005 to permit the beginning of restoration in 2006. Anticipated works are being guided by the competent authorities of the Centre of Preservation of the Holy Mount (Mount Athos) Heritage (KEDAK), the 10<sup>th</sup> Ephorate of Byzantine and post-Byzantine antiquities of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, and an advisory committee of scientists of international reputations set up to guide post-fire decision-making.

## 2005

ICOMOS would in addition like to draw the attention of the authorities to the following points:

- The funds allocated by the Ministry of Culture over the next 5 years (1,000,000 Euros) fall far short of the funds described as necessary (30,000,000 Euros) in the letter of the Greek authorities. It may be useful for the Committee to review with the Greek authorities fund raising options to close the short fall.
- It would be useful for the Greek authorities to undertake a risk preparedness study of all 20 monasteries on the Holy Mount, in order to systematically reduce the likelihood of fire elsewhere. Attention should also be paid in such a risk analysis exercise to seismic preparedness. ICOMOS believes that a risk preparedness report of this kind should be brought to the attention of the Committee.
- A number of other management problems have become evident in recent visits to the site by those from the Advisory Bodies ICOMOS and IUCN in recent years:

- Large European Union funded infrastructure projects have promoted intrusive road development projects (in a territory that has very limited vehicular traffic) and which have threatened long maintained landscape qualities around and between monasteries

Equally EU funded restoration projects are taking place without reference to the WH values recognized by inscription, and without following normal conservation standards for documentation, investigation and analysis

- IUCN members have expressed concern that the dominantly chestnut forest surrounding the monasteries – the last extensive forest in the Mediterranean area – is threatened by careless habits of timber extraction, and increasing road building between monastic settlements.
- ICOMOS recognizes the difficulties of bringing modern standards of management to a property whose intrinsic value depends on its preserving in part its traditional ways of life and faith, which themselves have developed with little attention to heritage management concerns. Further, ICOMOS recognizes that the great differences in outlook of the monasteries, and the great degree of independence accorded individual monasteries make development of fully co-ordinated approaches to heritage management difficult and unlikely. Nevertheless, at minimum, ICOMOS believes that an effort to provide a common forum among the monasteries to discuss heritage issues would prove very useful in strengthening the consistency and quality of care brought the heritage of the Holy Mount. ICOMOS believes that such a forum could be a logical outgrowth of efforts already launched by ICOMOS Greece to develop in collaboration with the monks a kind of conservation charter for Mount Athos.

29COM 7B.32

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. Having examined Document **WHC-05/29.COM/7B.Rev**,
2. Recalling its Decision **28 COM 15B.37**, adopted at its 28th session (Suzhou, China 2004),
3. Thanks the State Party of Greece for the report provided, concerning the immediate efforts to mitigate the fire which took place on 4 March 2004 at the Hilandry Monastery within Mount Athos;
4. Congratulates the State Party for the rapid and carefully planned response to the fire damage;
5. Requests the State Party to provide to the World Heritage Centre complementary detailed information on consolidation, cleaning operations and restoration of the Hilandry Monastery;
6. Urges the European Union to ensure that the equipment and restoration projects, to which it contributes financially, do not affect the values of the property;
7. Also requests the State Party to undertake a risk preparedness study, including seismic preparedness, of all 20 monasteries on the Holy Mount, in order to systematically reduce the likelihood of fire elsewhere, and possibility of other threats, and to explore the development of an overall management strategy for the World Heritage property, which would address both natural and cultural values, and provide for a common framework for action among the 20 monasteries on the property;
8. Further requests the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre / ICOMOS / IUCN mission, to assess the state of conservation of the property.

**2006**

The Greek authorities provided a report on 16 January 2006.

A. On the work carried out by the 10<sup>th</sup> Ephorate of Byzantine antiquities at Chilandari:

- 1) Clearing from debris the principal entrance (P7), areas of Despotika (P6), P8 and P9 at the south of the entrance, Nea Konakia P4, P5, P3 and P2.
- 2) Conservation of the wall paintings of the principal entrance, restoration at the sanctuary of the main church (Katholikon), including cleaning of the salt at the surface of walls caused by the water penetration during the fire extinguishing.
- 3) Consolidation and restoration of the wall paintings of the chapels of Saint Demetrios and Saint Nikolaos.

B. On the work done by KEDAK:

- 1) Cleaning of the destroyed parts of the surrounding walls.
- 2) Construction and establishment of a metallic structure for the support of the walls of the western part (Nea Konakia) and the south wall of Lefko Konaki;
- 3) Consolidation of the walls of the chapels of Saint Nikolaos, Saint Sabbas and Saint Dimitrios;
- D) Construction of new roofs for the chapels of Saint Sabba, Saint Dimitrios and Saint Nikolaos and of the apse of Saint Nikolaos.

C. Moreover, the monastery asked an architectural firm to prepare a study for the reconstruction of the destroyed wings of Despotiko (P6), Entrance of the Monastery and chapel of Saint Nikolaos (P7-P8), Lefko Konaki (P9-P10), Nea Konakia (P3, P4, P5), the wing of Theodosios (P2), The chapels of Saint Sabba and Saint Dimitrios (P1).

Regarding measures of protection against natural disasters, the Ministry of Culture has to date implemented different programs. In 2005, the Direction of Conservation of monuments of the Ministry of Culture published a series of volumes entitled "Earthquakes and antiquities. Preventive measures of the excavations of preservation of emergency". The Direction of Byzantine and post-Byzantine antiquities of the Ministry of Culture has also included in the framework of the European programme Archi-Med II the sub programme of Risk Map, which addresses the digital cataloguing of risks that menace the monuments.

Regarding the projects of road construction in the monastic complex, it must be noted that the program has been completed. The construction of other roads is not foreseen. The traditional extraction of timber is realised under the guidance of the Ministry of Agricultural Affairs and of the Ministry of Culture, with respect to the traditional methods of maintaining the natural beauty and integrity of the forest. It aims at cleaning the forest in order to minimize the risks of fire. Furthermore, an environmental study is being carried out by the Centre of protection of the heritage of the Sacred Mountain (KEDAK). Its objectives are to review the measures of protection of the overall eco-forest systems, as well as the management of supporting activities which would be planned and implemented.

### **Justification of the Mission**

The World Heritage Committee at its 29th session requested the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to undertake a mission to the World Heritage site of Mount Athos, to assess the state of conservation of the property ( Decision 29COM 7B.32). Specific concerns in assessing the State of Conservation of the site include its integrity and authenticity, consolidation, cleaning operations and restoration of the Chilandari Monastery, any threats to the chestnut forest surrounding the monasteries from timber extraction, logging and infrastructure development, as



well as, any large infrastructure projects on road developments between monasteries, which may threaten landscape values, the development of an overall approach to risk management shared by all monasteries, and an overall management plan for the inscribed property;

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

### **Protected area legislation at the national level**

The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention note that “all properties inscribed on the World Heritage List must have adequate long-term legislative, regulatory, institutional and/or traditional protection and management to ensure their safeguarding” (para 97). It is important to recognize that while Mount Athos forms a part of the territory of Greece, that management of the property derives both from national level initiatives described below, as well as measures developed and implemented within the “traditional management” regime co-ordinated by the property’s monastic community (also described below). The national authorities responsible for conservation measures on the site are careful to subordinate their actions to the traditional management scheme in place. Below the different national laws protecting the Mount Athos are listed.

**Culture:** Ministry of Culture decision /5980/16.10.1965. Government Gazette 714/29.10.1965 Presidential Decree 941/77 «On the Organization of the Ministry of Culture and Sciences » Government Gazette 320/A/17-10-1977. N. 2557/97 «Institution laws, measures and actions for cultural heritage», article 7 (on the special conservation status in Mount Athos), Government Gazette 271/A/24-12-1997. Presidential Decree 264/99 « Organization and execution of Conservation Work in Mount Athos » Government Gazette 215/A/19-10-1999. Law 3028/2002 «On the Protection of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage in general », Government Gazette 153/A/28-6-2002. Presidential Decree 191/2003 «Organization of the Ministry of Culture », Government Gazette 146/A/13-6-2003

**Nature:** The Special Environmental Study (SES) of the area has yet to be completed, as is stipulated in the Law 1650/1986 «On the protection of the environment»; as a result, the enactment of legislation for the buffer zones in the area has not taken place yet, and the Presidential Decree for the delimitation, management and protection of the area has yet to be issued. At this point, it is worth noting that the elaboration of the SES is progressing on the initiative of the Ecclesiastical Administration. However, the special status of the area, characterized by a controlled number of visitors with a specific profile (religious tourism is predominant), constitutes an important and critical measure for the preservation and the management of the area.

Most of the peninsula of Athos has been inscribed in the provisional list as a Natura 2000 site<sup>1</sup>, with the exception of a small part in the North-west. As such, it is protected under the European Union Habitats Directive (92/43/ EEC). For Greece, the provisional list is in the process of finalisation, but no changes are expected as to the inclusion of Mt. Athos. As a Natura 2000 site, Mt. Athos should be under the care of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works. However, due to heavy work load and insufficiency of staff, the Service on Nature Management of this Ministry has not yet been actively involved. Two years ago, a local initiative started for the preparation of a Special Environmental Study entrusted to two consulting firms in Thessaloniki<sup>2</sup>, and its terms of reference were submitted to the Service on Nature Management and approved by them. It should be noted here that the European Commission DG Environment considers the Special

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<sup>1</sup> With a site code of GR1270003 and an area of 22,000 ha.

<sup>2</sup> In accordance with Law 1650 of 1986 on the ‘Protection of the environment’.

Environmental Studies carried out in Greece as equivalent to management plans for the Natura 2000 sites in Greece.

In environmental matters, the Forestry Ephorate (consisting of three monks<sup>3</sup>) plays a major role.

### **“Traditional management” framework**

It is important to recognize that the remarkable tangible heritage of Mount Athos cannot be separated from the intangible sacred practices and traditions which gave birth to it, and which have assured the survival of that tangible heritage to the present day. Although the royal patronage of Constantinople has been replaced by the largesse of the European Union, it is the continuing faith of those present on the Holy Mountain that have developed, sustained and nurtured that heritage. Any approach to the long term conservation of Mount Athos must recognize the primacy of the living nature of the heritage, and integrate treatment of the physical in the context of maintaining those living religious heritage traditions.

Those living traditions extend to the forms of governance exercised on Mount Athos; since the formal establishment of Mount Athos by Saint Athanassias in 10<sup>th</sup> century, the individual monasteries have been self-administered, and working within a regime of “tipica” which govern daily life and transactions. Traditionally, the 20 Monastic Brotherhoods own separately the entire area of the peninsula and have almost complete administrative autonomy, although certain matters of common interest are handled by the Holy Community, the legislative arm of the Mount Athos government, constituted by official representatives of the 20 Monasteries. The Holy Community provides an assembly for discussion and resolution of common problems. The Holy Supervision, consisting of four members elected by the five oldest Monasteries, carries responsibility for executive functions. The actual management of the area today involves maintaining a delicate balance between the Monastic Communities on Mt. Athos and the responsible services of the Greek State. In addition, the area is subject to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople for spiritual matters and to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs for political ones.

Mount Athos is accustomed to exercising control over its own destiny. Its survival through a 1000 years of external turmoil which have seen nation states and empires around it come and go, has given it great confidence in its own decision making institutions and the appropriateness of its own priorities. While Greece has nominated Mount Athos to the World Heritage List, Mount Athos retains a unique position within Greece, and since 1926 has enjoyed a kind of semi-autonomy within the Greek State. The independence of Mount Athos from the normal constraints of secular regimes is reinforced by the special nature of its external relations; the Mount Athos monasteries are responsible to the Patriarchate in Istanbul, and individual monasteries such as Chilandari enjoy privileged relations with other governments (in this case, that of Serbia). Any approach to improving conservation must take into account the particular nature of the governance mechanisms in place and respect the rights and independence of the individual monasteries, and also the special sense of unique destiny enjoyed by the community of monasteries.

While external conservation authorities (including the World Heritage Committee) may question whether the priorities of the monasteries in using available European Union funding correspond to their sense of appropriate conservation priorities, it is important to recall that our efforts are best directed at conserving the fruits of a long standing governance tradition characterized by its preference for non-secular priorities, and that the Committee and the Advisory Bodies should be careful to question these.

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<sup>3</sup> Forestry Committee, consisting currently of Fathers Nicodimos (Megisti Lavra), Theodossius (Stavronikita) and Efthymios (Zographou).

## **Management activity and co-ordination**

It is important to recognize that Mount Athos is in the culmination of a 40 year period of profound physical, human and spiritual revival; from a point in the early 60s when the survival of Mount Athos seemed in doubt, circumstances have altered favourably. Substantial funds are being made available for physical restoration and infrastructure improvement, monasteries are able to recruit young, well educated, and highly motivated and committed monks, and the spirit which has sustained Mount Athos for over 1000 years is alive and well.

As a result, it is possible today to see most monasteries repairing and rehabilitating their most deteriorated structures, improving guest facilities and organising improved conditions for the storage and display of their immensely important collections of religious art, vestments and manuscripts. While the pace and focus of the work varies from monastery to monastery, a shared commitment to improvement of the facilities is evident.

This process of renewal has accelerated in recent years with the arrival of funding from the European Union, which made available very important funds in recent years. The greater part of this money is passed directly to the Holy Community in Mount Athos who partition these funds and disburse them directly to individual monasteries, without exercising any particular control over the focus and nature of the spending.

The Ministry of Culture (the authority responsible for managing the nation's Byzantine antiquities) is not able to exercise any direct control over the setting of priorities by monasteries nor to supervise and control the implementation of activities carried out by the monasteries, except in those instances where good relations have fostered a spirit of collaboration. While the Ministry has the authority to intervene where listed monuments are at risk, or are being damaged through inappropriate conservation, it recognizes the good intentions of the monastic community and prefers to resolve disagreements about conservation approaches through negotiation rather than the application of legal sanctions.

Another party involved in the work at Mount Athos is KEDAK, set up in 1981 on a temporary basis to receive regional funds to carry out restoration projects in Mount Athos.

The Ministry has itself received 6,000,000 Euros in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Framework Support Programme and applies its expertise in individual projects with co-operating monasteries, for example, with the restoration of mural paintings in certain churches, the documentation and conservation of collections and archives, and the physical work of restoring the Protaton in Karyes. The precautionary exterior shelter and interior steel scaffolding prepared for work on the Protaton are a remarkable demonstration of the capacity of the 10<sup>th</sup> Ephorate to provide the very highest levels of conservation care, in this case for a truly remarkable testimony of the culture and art of the Greek Orthodox Church.

The Ministry of Culture staff carry out their work to the highest standards of conservation quality, and in a fully collaborative manner with various monasteries, for the work with which they are involved. Their efforts provide a model of sensitive and integrated approaches to conservation work, fully cognizant of the need to balance protection of surviving physical heritage with concern for maintaining the living traditions of the monastic community.

### 3 IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF ISSUES / THREATS

#### **Management effectiveness**

The 29<sup>th</sup> Committee requested “ *the State Party..... to explore the development of an overall management strategy for the World Heritage property, which would address both natural and cultural values, and provide for a common framework for action among the 20 monasteries on the property*”;

It is important to explain that a WH management plan is meant to guide decision-making to respect the outstanding universal value recognized by inscription, and to provide general guidelines and principles to guide development – not a detailed action plan.

It is important also to recognize that a management plan/ strategy for Mount Athos would necessarily contain individual plans for each monastery which would recognize the individuality of each, but also provide an overall framework defining shared principles of a common approach.

A management plan would also address the absence of conventional planning controls in Greece, and which has had several consequences:

- The kinds of EAs that would normally be undertaken in most countries at national level prior to development of major projects are not undertaken – hence there is little or no opportunity to review possible mitigative measures for development or review possible project options.
- A reluctance on the part of the Holy Community to see system planning as a priority; preference in spending and action is given to building projects of the individual monasteries, but not for example for a study to review the road network within Mount Athos.

Lastly, it is important to recognize that a management plan would provide a means not just to respond to requests made by the World Heritage Committee to produce such a plan, but a means to respond to problems identified by the State Party. All the problems mentioned above are due to a large extent to the lack of an overall ‘management plan’ for Mt. Athos. Such a plan has been proposed from many sides, and while it was almost approved in 1999 after an initiative of the Forest Ephorate, it is still pending. In its place, a Special Environmental Study was commissioned<sup>4</sup> a year ago and will be finalised in late March 2006. After its completion, the study should be submitted for approval both to the Holy Community of Mt. Athos and to the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works.

#### **Nature and extent of threats to the property, taking into consideration the natural values for which the property was inscribed and specific issues outlined by the World Heritage Committee**

Mt. Athos, a mountainous peninsula of about 60 km by 7-19 km, is covered with forests, leading to the peak of Mt. Athos to the SE with 2,033 m above sea level, from which numerous rivers flow, in deep ravines. The peninsula includes a variety of ecosystems and a high diversity of flora and fauna species. The overall environment of Mt. Athos can be divided in certain distinct categories, whose conditions and threats) are described below.

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<sup>4</sup> To two consulting firms in Thessaloniki, Techno-Omoistasis (responsible Costas Contos) and Business Architects (responsible Stephanos Fotiou), while from Mt. Athos the person in charge has been Father Grigorios (from the Grigoriou Monastery).

### Marine zone:

The marine zone around the peninsula of Mt. Athos is in good condition and is said to still include an unknown number of *Monachus monachus*. There are no substantial sources of pollution. Fishing is not allowed closer than 500 m from the coast, except by the monks themselves and for their own use. Illegal commercial fishing is very limited, and is well controlled by the coast guard. Recently, there were some discussions in the Holy Community about allowing small local fishermen to enter the no-fishing zone, for humanitarian reasons, but no final decision has been taken.

### Coastal zone:

Most of the coastline is rocky and steep, with areas of pebbles and sand, without any natural harbours, and is not used except for transport purposes. The eastern coast is often lashed by northerly winds, while the western one is more sheltered and has a warmer climate. Most of the Monasteries have traditionally maintained small installations on the coast (*arsanas*<sup>5</sup>) for the mooring and safekeeping of small boats. Recently, the need to moor ferries transporting wood and building materials has led to the construction of larger utilitarian portuary facilities in several parts of the coastline, whose integration in the landscape has not always been satisfactory.

### Forests:

Mt. Athos is covered to a large extent by forest, of various types, due to the different microclimatic zones, ranging from Mediterranean-type evergreens<sup>6</sup> and *maquis* to dense deciduous chestnut, oak and black pine forests to Alpine and sub-Alpine vegetation higher up.

The integrity of the forests has not been compromised, but there are certain threats, especially:

- Damage from the opening of roads, presumably for fire protection, but also to facilitate transport of timber.
- Unsustainable practices in certain areas leading to overexploitation.
- Monoculture of chestnut trees for exploitation purposes, leading to greater vulnerability to attacks by parasites (such as the one caused by *Endothia parasitica*).

On the positive side, however, there are a number of significant developments:

- Continuation and enforcement of the ban on grazing<sup>7</sup>, which allows the rapid natural regeneration of the forests, especially after fires.
- Effective operation of the Mt. Athos Forestry Ephorate (consisting of 3 monks representing Monasteries).
- Existence of forestry management plans for most of the monasteries, prepared by forestry consultants, on the basis of which timber exploitation is practiced by the Monasteries.
- Various studies for the improvement of forests and remedial action from road construction (see below).
- More efficient fire protection<sup>8</sup>, due to better organisation, material and personnel (although the maintenance of material –especially fire trucks– and the training of personnel need to be placed on a systematic basis).

It should be noted that forest exploitation in Athos is financially a marginal activity both for the loggers and the Monasteries, due to the high cost of manpower and transport. This fact encourages at present unwise exploitation.

### Cultivated areas:

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<sup>5</sup> Whose origin may be *arsenale*.

<sup>6</sup> Consisting mainly of *arbutus*, cypress, heather, holm oak, laurel, lentisk, *phillyrea*, pine and wild olive.

<sup>7</sup> With the exception of a limited number of mules, used mainly for timber transport.

<sup>8</sup> After the very destructive and extensive forest fire of August 1990.

In past centuries, a large part of the Athos peninsula was cultivated, mainly with vineyards and olive groves. Today, most of these have been abandoned and have reverted to forest. There is only one area of major commercial exploitation of vines for wine making<sup>9</sup>, and the rest are small areas of vines, olive trees and vegetable gardens in the vicinity of the Monasteries, mainly for internal use.

#### Inhabited areas:

They consist of purely Monastic facilities (Monasteries with their utilitarian dependencies, sketes and cells, arsanas), as well as the two small towns (the main port of Daphne and the capital of Karyes). All are well inscribed in their natural environment, with a usually harmonious transition from built to cultivated to wild forested areas.

There are various environmental threats and problems to be faced. The main ones can be summarised as follows:

#### Forest degradation:

In certain forests, excessive exploitation could lead to eventual degradation, in spite of natural regeneration. Management of this exploitation requires access to quantifiable analysis of chestnut forest exploitation in Mount Athos monastery by monastery: how much is being exploited annually? for what purposes? what is the re-planting policy and cycle?

In analysis, it would be also be important to recognize that demand for forest exploitation is one of the forces driving development of forest roads, and that if forest exploitation can be scaled back, then demand for roads can be scaled back.

#### Road network:

Mt. Athos has already an extensive network of roads. The required density of roads is estimated at 15-20 m/ha, but in certain Monastery properties it approaches 40 m/ha, which is excessive<sup>10</sup>. Most are dirt roads<sup>11</sup> and become often impassable in winter (due to mud and snow). They can easily revert to forest once abandoned. Lately, new roads are being opened and older ones improved, at places much wider than what seems necessary, and often without care for landscape integration. The cuts create slopes that will not be vegetated rapidly, and the excavated earth and rocks are dumped on the lower side creating serious environmental degradation.

It is worth noting that the Holy Community must give permission for building of roads. This represents commitment at some level to taking planning decisions which affect the overall management of Mount Athos – could this be extended to other domains? Is management of heritage ever discussed as a shared preoccupation?

#### Unregulated constructions:

In various places, utilitarian installations are found, such as storehouses (mainly for timber), building material storage areas and cement silos, which were erected seemingly without consideration for landscape protection.

#### Waste management:

The management of solid and liquid wastes is left to each Monastery. As a result, various unregulated dumping areas for garbage are located throughout Mt. Athos. These not only contribute to environmental degradation, but constitute potential fire hazards. Recently, an agreement was made for the transport of solid waste from Karyes to the Thessaloniki municipal facilities, but only as a temporary measure, until a suitable hygienic burial site may be found on Mt. Athos.

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<sup>9</sup> Tsantalís Winemaking within the Panteleimon Monastery property, while a smaller one is Mylopotamos.

<sup>10</sup> According to a 1999 study by EKBV (Greek Biotope Wetland centre).

<sup>11</sup> Except for a large part of the road between Daphne and Caryes.

One side problem is the dumping of abandoned vehicles (a small number of which were noted during the mission), which have no place on Mt. Athos.

#### Hunting:

Although not allowed on Mt. Athos, some of the workers (especially in forestry) own guns and use them at times. This is an activity that is not appropriate for this sensitive area and which should be controlled effectively.

It is also worth looking at issues concerning the conservation of the property's cultural heritage in some detail.

#### Architectural conservation:

In general, the quality of architectural conservation carried out at Mount Athos varies from monastery to monastery and project to project. Some projects have been entrusted to the 10<sup>th</sup> Ephorate; these range from work carried out at the Protaton to precautionary measures for protecting archival materials; KEDAK is also involved in many projects, often involving high degrees of engineering intervention. And in some cases, restoration projects of large scale are carried out by the monks themselves within their own monasteries. While some mission team members had personally viewed work recently carried out in some monasteries which appeared to pay little attention to accepted international conservation standards, in all cases viewed by the mission team, significant commitment to carrying out high quality work could be seen. The complex work being carried out at the fire-damaged monastery of Chilandri, for example, both to stabilize and to reclaim lost spaces is being carried out effectively and carefully, and closely follows accepted principles of conservation.

What is lacking at Mount Athos is an overall shared framework for conservation decision making that would ensure consistency and coherence among all decisions affecting heritage structures, from monastery to monastery. This means that decisions made today about what to keep, and how to treat what it is decided to keep may vary from site to site and project to project, within Mount Athos. In this direction, ICOMOS Greece in recent years has promoted the value of the monks developing a made-in-Mount Athos conservation charter which would define a common approach suitable for the Holy Mountain. While there may be some resistance by monasteries to adopt a common approach (as in other areas of monastic life), in the view of ICOMOS, this goal is still worth pursuing, and could be sought with the aid of ICOMOS Greece, and the support of the Holy Community.

#### Risk preparedness:

The 29<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee recommended that the State Party undertake a risk preparedness study, including seismic preparedness, of all 20 monasteries on the Holy Mount, in order to systematically reduce the likelihood of fire elsewhere, and possibility of other threats.

The preoccupation with fire has been a constant since the beginning of the establishment of Mount Athos and almost all monasteries have suffered badly at one time or another. Only Great Lavra has apparently not suffered a fire although it suffered a devastating earthquake in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Some monasteries have taken early measures to reduce risk due to fire. Iviron for example has had a large reserve water tank for fire (1,400 cubic metres) and a water distribution system in place since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Serious and noteworthy efforts are in place to reduce fire risk at present. The fire brigade at Karyes organises occasional training seminars on fire fighting for the monks, and carries out occasional inspection visits to monasteries at the invitation of those monasteries. A programme of KEDAK technical assistance, apparently launched as a part of the response to the fire at Chilandari is also currently available in a three year programme to assist monasteries to upgrade water fighting infrastructure, with the provision of 300 cubic metre water storage tanks, and related water distribution systems.

Fire suppression extinguishers were visible through out monasteries visited. Monasteries questioned on details of fire prevention (Ivion, Simonopetra) noted that each year during the allocation of tasks, a particular monk was placed in charge of fire preparedness and response efforts, and that a fire suppression team (usually 5-6 monks) was in place to guide response efforts of all monks during an emergency.

However the importance of improving training of monks was also noted. In one case, fire drills were held but only at intervals of several years.

Future programmes of risk preparedness should recognize a number of important points:

- important measures already taken by Ministry of Culture to facilitate care of important objects threatened by fire, e.g., manuscripts wrapped in cloth containers on the 4<sup>th</sup> level of the library at Vatopedi, and at Ivion, and the partial effort begun at Chilandari, and explore to what extent this practice can be extended.
- the continuing vulnerability of other parts of the collections including for example the Byzantine parchments shown to us on the second level of Vatopedi, and in other monasteries.
- the importance of reviewing any post-fire report prepared by the authorities of the Chilandari Monastery and the Greek authorities which would document lessons learned from the fire at Chilandari
- exploring the utility for the Holy Community and the Greek authorities of considering organising a training and sensitisation workshop among the monasteries, with possible involvement of outside institutions like ICCROM (which has a well tested series of training programmes and related tools for disaster preparedness and risk management), to examine lessons from Chilandari, which could be possibly applied in other monasteries. This could serve as a means to raise consciousness in each monastery of measures that could be undertaken to improve preparedness.

Such a workshop would be structured in the following way:

1. Analysis of what went wrong at Chilandari?

- discussion would touch source of fire, presence or absence (and functioning) of detection systems, response times and means, use of available suppression systems. Discussion should identify mistakes made, e.g., use of salt water to reduce fire spread.
- this discussion would lead to a second discussion of what could have been in place to reduce or eliminate destruction at Chilandari?

2. A rapid overview, based on preceding discussion, of the many ways in which fire risk can be acted upon and reduced.

- recognizing distinction between fire fighting, fire prevention, fire preparedness, fire response, fire recovery
- recognizing the three phases of planning: before, during or after



- recognizing that risk is the product of threat (likelihood of occurrence of particular hazard, e.g., fire) and vulnerability (likely impact of hazard)

3. The importance of verifying the existence of an emergency response plan for each monastery. Such a plan at minimum needs to:

- integrate care for human beings and property
- be built on an analysis of the intrinsic nature of the monastery (construction technology, materials, heritage, capacity of personnel to respond)
- establish clear lines of communication and authority during the disaster
- provide for regular and realistic fire drills
- provide clear accessible instructions to all staff and visitors in times of fire
- document priorities for action in case of disaster: which objects to go where, in what order of priority?
- provide for mobilising an emergency response team
- provide for heritage expertise to evaluate risk of surviving structures, and to defend heritage against unnecessary demolition.

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

##### **Review whether the values, on the basis of which the property was inscribed on the World Heritage List, and the conditions of integrity and the authenticity are being maintained**

The conditions of the ecosystems and in general of the natural and cultural environment of Mt. Athos, and the current threats have been described above. While these threats are of concern, in no way do these compromise the values for which Mount Athos has been included on the World Heritage List, and the integrity and authenticity of the site.

##### **Review any follow-up measures to previous decisions of the World Heritage Committee on the state of conservation of the property and measures which the State Party plans to take to protect the outstanding universal value of the property**

Of course, the situation should be improved, and this is well understood both by the Greek State and the Monastic communities of Mt. Athos, and as a result a number of measures have been and are being implemented. The most important ones are the following:

- A programme for the ecological management of the chestnut forests, funded by the EU, has been implemented by the Simonopetra Monastery during the 1990's and has provided useful lessons.
- Recently EKBY (the Greek Biotope Wetland Centre<sup>12</sup>) has been working on a project for the 'Rehabilitation of coppice *Quercus ilex* and *Quercus trainetto* woods<sup>13</sup> in Mt. Athos', in co-operation with the Holy Community and Monasteries, funded by LIFE-Nature<sup>14</sup>. The project, which aims at increasing biodiversity by re-establishing high forests, focuses on selective-inversion thinning applied experimentally to a pilot area of 500 ha, so that guidelines can be developed. In addition, it includes other measures, such as:
  - preparatory actions for mapping of these forests;
  - training of forest workers and monks for the better management of the forests;

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<sup>12</sup> Established in Thessaloniki, it operates in the framework of the Goulandris Museum of Natural History.

<sup>13</sup> Hungarian Oak and Holm Oak forests.

<sup>14</sup> Project LIFE03 NAT/GR0093, October 2003 to March 2005 (extended to 2006), with a budget of approximately two million euros. Its scientific director is professor Spyros Dafis.

- establishment of a system of management for the forest areas that have been thinned;
- various public awareness and information actions (web site, publication and meetings).
- EKBY has also prepared in 1999 for the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works a study on the 'Rehabilitation of slopes along the forest road network in Mt. Athos', which includes very interesting and wise recommendations.
- The preparation of a Special Environmental Study (now under completion).
- The regional authorities are considering the preparation of a study on the management of solid and liquid wastes.
- The possibility to proceed with the preparation of an overall management study for the Athos peninsula is being discussed by the Forest Ephorate and KEDAK<sup>15</sup>.
- The Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works is also considering the need of measures for the protection of the Mt. Athos Natura 2000 site.
- It is worth noting that these property wide measures being planned and in the course of implementation are focussed almost exclusively on the natural heritage values of the World Heritage property. It would be worthy drawing the attention of the State Party to the need over time to balance these initiatives with comparable and complementary initiatives concerning the cultural heritage values of the property.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Concerning the environment on Mt. Athos, a number of general and specific recommendations for additional action are presented below.

### General recommendations:

The highest priority is the preparation, approval and implementation of an integrated and multi-disciplinary management plan for the entire area of Mt. Athos, which should cover the following issues:

- Evaluation of the current situation, taking into account the co-existence of nature and spirituality / culture in Mt. Athos since the end of the first millennium, and the legitimate needs of the Monastic Brotherhoods;
- Circulation and transportation network of Mt. Athos;
- Integrated management of the natural environment;
- Sustainable management of the forests;
- Protection of the cultural landscape;
- Resolution of the problem of solid and liquid wastes;
- Management of risks, especially of fires and earthquakes, as well as eventual impacts from climate change
- The importance of developing a consistent approach to conservation decision-making from monastery to monastery.

Due to the administrative autonomy of the Monasteries, it would be better if such a study would consider all these aspects initially at the level of the entire peninsula, but then treat in greater detail proposals for the specific area of each Monastery.

The study described above should also give consideration to treatment of Mount Athos as a cultural landscape in development of any future management plan/ strategy and a possible re-nomination of the property as cultural landscape..

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<sup>15</sup> KEDAK is the Centre for the Preservation of the Athonite Heritage, in the framework of the Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace.

In addition:

- The cultural and natural values of Mount Athos have been recognized since inscription but mechanisms to integrate planning have not well developed;
- The Ministry of the Environment, Planning and Public Works mentioned as responsible, in the Periodic Report, has not been part of this mission;
- Similarly the full participation of the Forest Service in management of the site needs to be assured.

A comparison with the contents of the Special Environmental Study – currently in its final phase – (shown in Annex V) indicates that it might cover most of the points mentioned above, with the exception perhaps of risk management, and of developing a consistent approach to conservation decision-making.. An evaluation of the study would be appropriate to determine whether it would satisfy the requirements of the World Heritage Committee for a management plan.

In addition, the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works should be encouraged to assign high priority to Mt. Athos (in accordance with Law 1650/1986 and Community Directive 92/43/WWC). This Ministry should play a key role in the assessment, approval and implementation of the Mt. Athos management plan.

#### Specific recommendations:

A number of specific recommendations are also proposed to the Holy Community and to the Greek State:

- Forests
  - Implementation of the measures for the ecological management of the Mt. Athos forests, as developed through the Simonopetra / EC project<sup>16</sup>.
  - Extrapolation of the results of the above-mentioned Holy Community / EKBY / EC project to all of the oak forests of the peninsula.
  - Assessment of the viability of commercial forestry on Mt. Athos to determine whether the income from this activity could be obtained from other sources (such as EC subsidies). In such a case, traditional forestry would be practiced only for the needs of the Monasteries, relieving the considerable human and transport pressure that commercial forestry exerts currently on Mt. Athos.
  - Until that time, consideration of the possibility to manage sustainably the Mt. Athos forests in accordance with an international forestry certification system (such as FSC or PEFC), which would also provide commercial advantages.
- Road construction and maintenance
  - Rapid assessment of needs and prioritisation in the framework of the overall management study, or at least independently.
  - Forbidding the dumping of excavated matter on the lower slopes of roads.
  - Adoption of the recommendations of the EKBY study on road construction and the treatment of slopes.
  - Avoidance of 'hard' constructions in concrete, except for absolutely necessary interventions.
  - Planting of indigenous tree species along the newly opened roads to alleviate their impact on the landscape.
- Waste management

Until the completion of the general study under consideration, certain immediate measures should be taken, especially the following:

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<sup>16</sup> They include mainly care for the soils, encouragement of mixed forests (with the addition of *Prunus avium*, *Tilia platyphyllos*, *Acer pseudoplatanus*, *Quercus dalechampii*, selective cutting of chestnut trees every 40 years, protection of ancient trees and other similar measures.

- Collection and removal from Mt. Athos of all abandoned vehicles.
- Assessment of the feasibility to extend the Karyes – Thessaloniki Municipality agreement so that it covers the transport of solid wastes from the entire peninsula.
- Risk management  
Requests for documentation from the Greek authorities in 2004 and 2005 (*“The Committee .....requests the State Party to provide to the World Heritage Centre complementary detailed information on consolidation, cleaning operations and restoration of the Chilandari Monastery”*) have resulted in the State Party submitting letters providing an overview of activities undertaken, but not yet detailed professional reports on the disaster, its consequences, and recommendations on how to improve preparedness in future.

Nor have steps been taken so far toward carrying out “*a risk preparedness study, including seismic preparedness, of all 20 monasteries on the Holy Mount, in order to systematically reduce the likelihood of fire elsewhere, and possibility of other threats*”, as requested in the last two Committee sessions.

The Committee should recommend that the State Party urgently comply fully with the requests made to carry out the studies indicated.

In addition the mission strongly recommends that the State Party prepare an ongoing series of training workshops, in collaboration with the Advisory Bodies to strengthen the risk preparedness capacity of individual monasteries.

- European Union.  
The last Committee decision has noted the importance of urging the European Union to ensure its projects do not negatively impact the World Heritage values of the property. It is not clear to what extent this earlier recommendation has been followed up on. Attention should be given to addressing the following:

The Centre should urgently follow up on the decision of the Committee to “*Urge the European Union to ensure that the equipment and restoration projects, to which it contributes financially, do not affect the values of the property*”.

## 6 ANNEXES

### **I. Terms of Reference for the joint UNESCO – ICOMOS - IUCN mission to Mount Athos, Greece (30 January-4 February 2006)**

1. Carry out a joint UNESCO/WHC-ICOMOS-IUCN mission, as requested by the World Heritage Committee at its 29<sup>th</sup> Session (July 2005, Durban, South Africa) to assess the state of conservation of the property
2. Review the overall situation in Mount Athos with regard to the state of conservation of the site in its widest context, its integrity and its authenticity;
3. Assess the impacts of the consolidating, cleaning and restoration efforts following the 2004 fire at the Chilandari Monastery and any on-going (EU funded) restoration projects on the World Heritage values of the Property;
4. Assess any threats to the chestnut forest surrounding the monasteries from timber extraction, logging and infrastructure development; Following deforestation and degradation in the mountainous terrain, erosion and landslides could threaten the property;

5. Discuss with the relevant authorities and assess any large (EU funded) infrastructure projects on road developments between monasteries, which may threaten landscape values;
6. Discuss with the relevant authorities and assess the progress being made in preparing the requested risk preparedness study, including seismic risk preparedness, of all the 20 monasteries on the Holly Mount, in order to systematically reduce the likelihood of fire elsewhere, and possibility of any other threats (including destabilisation);
7. Discuss with the relevant authorities the development of an overall management strategy for the World Heritage property, which would address both natural and cultural values, and provide for a common framework for action among the 20 monasteries on the property;
8. Prepare a detailed report, according to the enclosed format (Annex II), by 15 March 2006 for review by the World Heritage Committee considering Operational Guidelines paragraphs 178-186 and 192-198, and submit the report to the World Heritage Centre in electronic form (10-15 pages);

## **II. Itinerary and programme**

The mission visited the following places during the period Jan. 30 – Feb. 4, 2006.:

- Karyes, government seat of Mount Athos. Official meeting with the Governor of Mount Athos.
- Visit to the Protaton Church
- Monastery of Vatopedi (also overnight stay)
- Monastery of Stravronikita
- Monastery of Iviron (also overnight stay).
- Monastery of Lavra
- Monastery of Simonos Petras (including overnight stay).
- Monastery of Chilandari.

## **III. Composition of mission team**

Christian Manhart, UNESCO World Heritage Centre;  
Thymio Papayannis, IUCN;  
Herb Stovel, ICOMOS,

## **IV. List and contact details of people met**

Aghios Protos Pavlos (Chair of Holy Community),  
HE Mr Aristos Kasmiroglou, Deputy Civilian Governor of Mount Athos,  
Father Ephraim (Abbot Vatopedi),  
Father Arsenios (Deputy Abbot Vatopedi),  
Father Tychon (Abbot Stavronikita),  
Father Natanaeli (Abbot Iviron),  
Father Christophorus (Chief Secretary Iviron),  
Father Anthonius (Responsible for Buildings and Forests Iviron),  
Father Prodromos (Abbot Lavra),  
Father Nicodimos (Megisti Lavra),  
Father Ioannis (Chief Secretary Lavra),  
Father Elisseus (Abbot Simonopetri),

Father Nilos (Deputy Abbot Simonopetri),

Father Methodiou (Responsible for restoration work Chilandary),

Mr Isidoros Kakouris (Director of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Antiquities),  
[protocol@dbmm.culture.gr](mailto:protocol@dbmm.culture.gr) Tel: +30 1 8201643

Mr Ioannis Tavlakis (Director of 10<sup>th</sup> Ephorate of Byzantines Antiquities), [tavlakis@10eba.gr](mailto:tavlakis@10eba.gr) Tel:  
+30 2310 285163

Mr Christos Limenopoulos (President KEDAK), [kedak@otenet.gr](mailto:kedak@otenet.gr)

## **V. Contents of the Special Environmental Study for Mt. Athos**

### **A. Introduction**

1. General data
2. Analysis of the wider area of the study
3. Legislation and protection status

### **B. Description of the study area**

4. Natural environment
  - 4.1 General description
  - 4.2 Geology – geomorphology
  - 4.3 Hydrology – hydrogeology
  - 4.4 Climatic conditions
  - 4.5 Flora
  - 4.6 Vegetation
  - 4.7 Fauna
  - 4.8 Landscapes
5. Anthropic environment
  - 5.1 Population and demographic data
  - 5.2 Social and cultural data
  - 5.3 Land uses
  - 5.4 Socio-economic activities
  - 5.5 Technical infrastructure networks
  - 5.6 Cultural data

### **C. Overall assessment of the conditions and synthesis of data**

6. Evaluation of natural environment aspects
  - 6.1 Assessment of species, habitats, ecosystems and landscapes
  - 6.2 Assessment of the importance of the area and of the need for interventions
7. Assessment of restoration and enhancement potential

### **D. Intervention plan**

8. Specification of the principles and objectives of the interventions
9. Integration of the area in the categories of Law 1650/1986 (protected areas)
10. Special management measures for the entire area under protection
11. Management programme and establishment of Special Management Service

## Bibliography

Draft of a Presidential Decree for the approval of the Special Environmental Study

### **VI. Photographs and other graphical material (showing issues of integrity)**



Mount Athos - Russian Monastery



Mount Athos - Bible from Vatopedi Monastery



Mount Athos - Simonopetra Monastery



Mount Athos - refectory - Chilandari Monastery

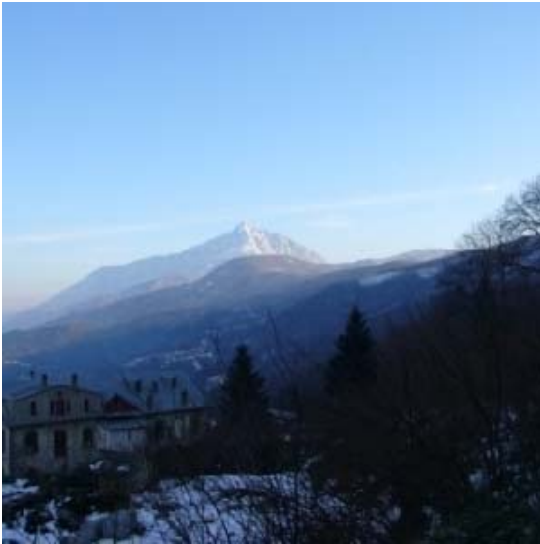




Mount Athos



Mount Athos - work in Protaton church – Karyes



Mount Athos



Mount Athos - work at Vatopedi Monastery



Mount Athos - library Vatopedi Monastery



Mount Athos - road construction





Mount Athos - Stavronikita Monastery



Mount Athos - Iviron Monastery



Mount Athos - Chilandari Monastery



Mount Athos - reconstruction Chilandari Monastery



Mount Athos - reconstruction Chilandari Monastery/Mount Athos - reactive monitoring mission Feb 2006