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World Heritage Convention

46 COM

WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.3

Paris, 5 July 2024

Original: English

**CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF
THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION
OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

**Forty-sixth session
New Delhi, India
21 – 31 July 2024**

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

Summary

This document contains information on the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. The World Heritage Committee is requested to review the reports on the state of conservation of properties contained in this document. The full reports of Reactive Monitoring missions requested by the World Heritage Committee are available at the following Web address in their original language: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/46COM/documents>

All previous state of conservation reports will be available through the World Heritage State of conservation Information System at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>

Decision required: The World Heritage Committee may wish to adopt the draft Decision presented at the end of each state of conservation report.

Note: For each section, the reports are presented in the English alphabetical order of States Parties.

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CULTURAL PROPERTIES

EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

16. Historic Areas of Istanbul (Türkiye) (C 356bis)

See Document WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.4

17. Derwent Valley Mills (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) (C 1030)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 2001

Criteria (ii)(iv)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger N/A

Previous Committee Decisions see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1030/documents/>

International Assistance

Requests approved: 0

Total amount approved: USD 0

For details, see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1030/assistance/>

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

N/A

Previous monitoring missions

N/A

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- Development proposals in the wider setting, buffer zone, and within the property
- Poor state of conservation of the large Belper Mills complex
- Fragmented management system

Illustrative material see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1030/>

Current conservation issues

Following the recommendation of the Committee (Decision **45 COM 7B.61**), a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM Advisory mission was invited to visit the property from 31 January to 2 February 2024 (mission report available at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1030/documents/>). Subsequently, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report on 5 February 2024, available at the same link, in which it presents conservation issues raised by the Committee at its previous session as follows:

- The 'Landmark' project in Derby was approved by the Derby City Council in August 2020 and the development has commenced;
- Historic England formally requested that the Secretary of State determine the 'Bradshaw Way' and 'Eagle Quarter' developments. Decisions on these applications are pending;

- Following expert advice from Historic England, proposals in Belper for 114 homes ('Derwent Street (North)') and 16 apartments in a derelict Grade II-listed warehouse ('Fuchs') were brought to a positive final scheme and their construction is nearing completion;
- Alternative options for the adaptive reuse of Belper Mills have been commissioned by the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage site (DVMWHS) Partnership and negotiations with the site owner are ongoing;
- The Belper 2021 Neighbourhood Plan identifies three sites for redevelopment within the property, one of which has been completed and another approved;
- Updated information is awaited on the 'Amber Rock Resort' proposal at Crich Quarry;
- Two further development proposals in Belper were dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate in part due to their impact on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property.

In relation to the protection and management of the property, the report notes that:

- Local Plans (Derbyshire County Council and Derby City Council Minerals and Waste Plans; Derby City Local Plan; Amber Valley Local Plan; Erewash Borough Council) and the Darley Abbey Mills policy (AC10), the general heritage policy and the Derby City Council Design Guide for development are newly developed or currently under review;
- The DVMWHS Partnership undertook a second round of training to local planning authorities across the property.

Other conservation issues reported include:

- Historic England raised concerns about the submission of an outline application for 60 new dwellings at 'Land Off Derwent' Street, due to the sensitive location within the property. Further details are currently awaited;
- Major conservation work is underway at Cromford Mills;
- The Museum of Making (Derby Silk Mill) reopened in January 2024, following severe flooding in 2023;
- The City of Derby's Our City Our River flood alleviation project continues and the flood protection packages implemented to date are reported to be performing well. A master plan is being developed;
- The Arkwright Society is delivering hydropower and water source heating schemes. The hydropower project at Cromford is in partnership with Derwent Hydro, who have also taken over and reopened the Grade II*-listed Masson Mills at Matlock Bath and the historic turbine at Belper Mills;
- The temporary structure at Darley Abbey Bridge is now in place and operational. The Derby City Council and Historic England are working on a permanent replacement.

The State Party submitted a Paragraph 172 notification with its report for a proposed development at 'Full Street', Derby, for a planned residential scheme of 186 apartments with commercial units as an extension to the Premier Inn.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM

Development pressure within the property, its buffer zone and wider setting remains a matter of great concern. In the context of the 2024 joint Advisory mission, the State Party informed the World Heritage Centre of the current status of a number of development proposals, including the approved 'Landmark', 'Bradshaw Way' and 'Eagle Quarter' high-rise developments in the buffer zone in Derby, and the now-completed or near-completed large housing developments 'Belper Lane' and 'Derwent Steet' within the property in Belper. The first four developments were assessed negatively by ICOMOS, while 'Derwent Steet' was not notified by the State Party to the World Heritage Centre prior to implementation. The mission visited the sites of several other proposed housing developments, including those identified in the Belper 2021 Neighbourhood Plan (new 'Ada Belfield Centre and Library', 'Babington Hospital', 'Ada Belfield Home', 'Land Off Derwent Street', and the former 'Fuchs' site), one of which has been completed and another approved. Historic England had assessed all positively with the exception of 'Land Off Derwent', for which it had raised concerns.

During the mission, the State Party provided information on the so-called 'Full Street' project, which proposes an extension to the 6-storey Premier Inn Derby City Centre (Cathedral Quarter) Hotel, including a 9-storey residential development of 186 apartments, within the property's buffer zone. The Advisory mission confirmed Historic England's advice that the scheme in its current form would have a serious adverse and irreversible impact on the property's OUV, particularly on its integrity. The Committee may wish to request the State Party not to approve the current scheme and to submit any future revised scheme to the World Heritage Centre for review by ICOMOS, and that no irreversible decision be taken until the recommendations of the ICOMOS Technical Review have been shared with the State Party.

The mission was also made aware of the 'Leonardo Hotel Derby – Former Jurys Inn, a 10 storey, 213-bedroom hotel built in 2009 in the buffer zone adjacent to the property's boundary. Following the mission, the Centre also learnt of three further proposals in Derby, one of which has been completed and two of which have been approved ('Cathedral Court 350', 'Derby Bio House', 'Beckettwell Apartments'). It is regrettable that the State Party did not notify the World Heritage Centre of these development according to the Committee's invitation and Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

The Belper Mills, a key component of the property, continues to face conservation challenges, particularly the East and North Mills. Following objections from Historic England and a negative review by ICOMOS of an inappropriate reuse proposal, alternative options have been commissioned by the DVMWHS Partnership and have been subject to public consultation.

The commitment of a wide range of stakeholders involved in the DVMWHS Partnership to the conservation of the property is noted, especially through the positive examples of the Museum of Making, the re-use of Darley Abbey, the new Ada Belfield Centre and Library, and the mixed-use redevelopment of Cromford Mills, which support the sustainable development of the property, preserve its character and give the industrial heritage a function in the life of the community.

Despite these welcome efforts to find alternative and sustainable proposals, the development of inappropriate proposals and the approval of several development projects against the recommendations of the DVMWHS Partnership and Historic England and ICOMOS advice highlights the critical disconnect between the planning system and the protection of the OUV of the property. Considering the significant development that has taken place within the property and its buffer zone, the Advisory mission recommended that an assessment of the cumulative impact of all projects undertaken since the inscription of the property be undertaken to provide a baseline for any future individual impact assessments. In the case of projects currently under consideration and other potentially impactful future projects, thorough Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs), based on the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, should be systematically undertaken against the above baseline. All HIAs should include the option of not proceeding with a proposed action and a comparison with less impactful project alternatives.

The protection and management system remains highly fragmented and appears inadequate. The Committee's previous requests regarding the legal jurisdiction and agency of the management authority, the legal status of the Management Plan and its legal mandate for the execution of HIAs remain relevant.

Most fundamentally, it is also necessary that the aims of the revised/updated Management Plan for DVMWHS are incorporated into the regulatory framework of planning instruments such as Local Plans and that management is coordinated across the property. As local authorities draft or review their Local Plans in 2024, the Committee may wish to reiterate its request that these draft plans and associated HIAs be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to their adoption.

In relation to the 2020-2025 Management Plan review/update process, it would be appropriate to request the State Party to use this process to augment the attributes listed in the current Management Plan to more fully reflect how they both truthfully and credibly convey the OUV of the property, how the buffer zone and wider setting of the rural landscape support OUV, and to include a risk management and emergency preparedness plan for the property as a whole so that flood preparedness and prevention planning is in place, particularly for the most vulnerable areas of the property.

Based on the findings of the mission, it appears that the development pressure on the property, coupled with the inability of the management system to safeguard its OUV, has reached such a level that, if not urgently addressed, may confirm an ascertained or potential threat as defined in Paragraph 179 of the Operational Guidelines. The Committee may therefore urge the State Party to halt all new developments which may have a negative impact on the OUV of the property, including those that have already been

approved, until the review of local plans by ICOMOS has been completed and its recommendations taken into account.

Draft Decision: 46 COM 7B.17

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.3,
2. Recalling Decision **45 COM 7B.61**, adopted at its extended 45th session (Riyadh, 2023),
3. Thanks the State Party for the timely invitation of a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM Advisory mission, following its recommendation, notes with concern the findings of the mission that the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property continues to face significant ascertained and potential threats, in particular as a result of development pressures and a fragmented management system, and requests the State Party to implement the recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory mission;
4. Also notes that preparatory work for the Landmark project has begun and that the 'Bradshaw Way' and 'Eagle Quarter' developments in Derby as well as the 'Amber Rock Resort' proposal in Crich are still pending determination in their current form and reiterates its previous request to the State Party to reconsider the approval of the Landmark project and not to approve the implementation of the 'Bradshaw Way', 'Eagle Quarter' and 'Amber Rock' proposals in their current form in order to avoid the negative impacts they will have on the OUV of the property;
5. Further notes the State Party's efforts to find alternative and sustainable proposals to address the poor condition of the Belper Mills complex, and also requests that details of a revised proposal, together with the commissioned study of the proposals and the associated Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) based on the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to any approvals that may be difficult to reverse;
6. Regrets that the 'Belper Lane' development of 118 homes has been completed against the advice of ICOMOS and that the 'Derwent Street' development of 114 homes has almost been completed without prior notification to the World Heritage Centre and, given the significant number of developments in Belper, further requests that all developments of the Belper 2021 Neighbourhood Plan be promptly and fully notified to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies, prior to any final decision, if they are likely to affect the property, its buffer zone or wider setting;
7. Also regrets the construction of the Leonardo Hotel Derby - Formerly Jurys Inn and the Premier Inn Derby City Centre (Cathedral Quarter) Hotel within the buffer zone of the property without notification to the World Heritage Centre and requests furthermore that the proposed extension to the latter, the so-called Full Street project, not be approved and, should a revised scheme be envisaged, that it be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to any irreversible decision;
8. Requests moreover that an assessment be made of the cumulative impact of all projects undertaken within the boundaries of the property and its buffer zone since the inscription of the property in order to establish a baseline for any individual impact assessment; and further requests that in the case of projects in the process of being decided upon, a

thorough HIA based on the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context* be undertaken against the above baseline, including the systematic evaluation of real comparisons with less impactful project alternatives, thereby adopting a precautionary approach to all new development projects and ensuring that projects are assessed for their cumulative impact on its OUV;

9. Acknowledges that the Local Plans are currently under review, reiterates its concern that review processes do not appear to be coordinated or their potential impacts on the OUV of the property assessed cumulatively, which has led to intrusive development projects, particularly in Belper, and also reiterates its request to the State Party to ensure that all new local plans and policies affecting the property, its buffer zone and its wider setting are assessed through integrated HIAs in conformity with the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*, and that draft plans and relevant HIAs are submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to their adoption;
10. Further reiterates its request to the State Party to initiate a review of the management system of the property with the aim of establishing a fully functioning management system that provides for:
 - a) A management authority with the legal jurisdiction and agency to ensure that the OUV of the property is safeguarded, including by coordinating the spatial and other plans of the various authorities with spatial mandates over the various sections of the property and its buffer zone and wider setting,
 - b) Legal status for the Management Plan of the property,
 - c) A legal mandate for the execution of HIAs, as prescribed by the *Operational Guidelines*, in conformity with the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*;
11. Further requests that in the above process:
 - a) The attributes listed in the 2020-2025 Management Plan for the property be augmented to reflect more fully how they both truthfully and credibly convey the OUV of the property and how the buffer zone and the wider setting of the rural landscape support OUV,
 - b) A risk management and emergency preparedness plan for the entire World Heritage property be included;
12. Reiterates its grave concern that development pressures on the property, coupled with the inability of the management system to safeguard its OUV, are reaching such proportions that, if not addressed as a matter of urgency, ascertained or potential threat, as defined in Paragraph 179 of the *Operational Guidelines*, could be confirmed if the recommendations of the 2024 joint Advisory mission to the property are not followed;
13. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2025**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, together with an action plan to implement the recommendations of the Advisory mission, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 47th session, **considering that the urgent conservation needs of this property require a broad mobilization to preserve its OUV.**

AFRICA

23. Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove (Nigeria) (C 1118)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 2005

Criteria (ii)(iii)(vi)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger N/A

Previous Committee Decisions see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1118/documents>

International Assistance

Requests approved: 1 (from 1999-1999)

Total amount approved: USD 10,000

For details, see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1118/assistance/>

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

In 2020: USD 49,620 from the UNESCO / Netherlands Funds-in-Trust for the Development of a Conservation Methodology, training, digital documentation and review of the Conservation Management Plan

Previous monitoring missions

October 2015: ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission; August 2023: Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- Urban development close to the property
- Road construction around the property
- Pollution of the Osun River
- Bush fires within the property
- Adverse impact of the commercialisation of the annual festival
- Fragility of spiritual, symbolic and ritual qualities of the Grove in the face of a growth in visitor numbers and the lack of a tourism management plan
- Road through property not re-aligned
- Inappropriate restoration and reconstruction

Illustrative material see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1118/>

Current conservation issues

A joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission visited the property in August 2023 (mission report available at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1118/documents/>).

On 22 February 2024, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report, which is available at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1118/documents/>. Progress in a number of conservation issues addressed by the Committee at its previous sessions is presented in this report, as follows:

- The National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), the Osun State Government, the Ataoja-in-Council, the Adunni Olorisa Trust Foundation (AOTF) and relevant stakeholders collaborate on the management of the property;
- Following on from the recent digital documentation of the shrines, the AOTF and the NCMM are documenting material maintenance and repairs;
- Discussions continue on the agreement with the Ataoja of Osogbo to share revenue from the annual Osun festival for the conservation of the property;
- Discussions continue on the diversion of the current road to the outskirts of the property based on a letter of commitment from the Osun State Government;

- The Osun River is not polluted, in part due to the efforts of the management stakeholders. New water tests have been commissioned and water-safety campaigns continue. Federal ministries have undertaken action to stop illegal gold mining in the region;
- The failure to report the collapse of the Busanyin Shrine was an oversight. Digital documentation of the shrine and a Flood Mitigation Masterplan have been compiled through support of the United States Ambassadors Fund and will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre. Interim flood mitigation measures are in place;
- The fragile property is now managed through a Conservation Management Plan (CMP). The State Party notes that no extreme threats currently exist;
- During the 2023 Reactive Monitoring mission, it was established that cement was a primary material used by Austrian artist Susanne Wenger in her processes. Her methods were transferred to the New Sacred Artists, who are integral to conservation and maintenance works. Consequently, the sculptures and shrines retain their authenticity. A Conservation Strategy, which is being funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust, will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre;
- The review and updating of the CMP are on hold pending the report of the 2023 Reactive Monitoring mission.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM

The State Party's willingness to proceed with updating the CMP and compiling a Conservation Strategy is welcome.

The 2023 joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission reports that the state of conservation is relatively good overall. It notes that progress has been made in addressing pollution, decay, and riverbank erosion, but identified challenges persist, particularly concerning the conservation of the sacred 20th century artworks. As noted in previous reports, cement was the original material used in the creation of the sculptures by Austrian artist Susanne Wenger. However, cement is susceptible to cracking and water ingress, leading to corrosion of the internal steel reinforcements. The 2023 mission recommends that conservation of the sculptures, including small repairs, should take preference over reconstruction. As previously reported, reconstructive processes are of considerable concern in relation to the authenticity of the property as multiple recreations over time will not support authenticity and must be avoided. The need for future reconstruction can be reduced through the application of alternative conservation processes and materials. Accurate and detailed inventories are also needed of all the 20th century artworks setting out their forms at the time of inscription and any changes since. The draft updated CMP should be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies.

At the time of inscription, the ecological restoration of the primary forest, parts of which are included in the buffer zone, was identified as a primary management goal. The 2023 mission notes that since then, approximately 28% of the buffer zone has been converted through encroachment, and no clear delineation maps of the property are available to the management. A car park is now planned in the buffer zone. The 2023 mission recommends for a review to be undertaken to assess past measures aimed at ecological restoration, and to implement measures to reverse encroachments and reductions of the primary forest since the time of inscription.

The reported collaboration between stakeholders in the management of the property is essential to ensure the maintenance of its OUV. The discussions to share revenue from the annual Osun festival for the conservation of the property (previously reported in 2023) and relocate the road out of the property are important. The road relocation was foreseen in the Management Plan at the time of inscription and the Committee then requested that the State Party provide information, as soon as possible, on the closure of the tarmac road. The State Party should urgently continue with its discussions and submit to the World Heritage Centre the details of the alignment of the proposed road, the design of the bridge and plans for downgrading the existing road before their implementation.

The State Party report that the Osun River is not polluted is welcome, as this water is used by worshippers. However, the 2023 mission reported that pollution remains a source of concern. As no details of past water tests are provided, it is unclear if the continued water-safety campaigns are sufficient to ensure that worshippers are not at risk. In its 2021 state of conservation report, the State Party noted that the Osun State had agreed to carry out regular sampling of water in the Osun River.

The 2023 mission highlights that testing needs to be undertaken on a regular basis. Sharing the outcomes of past and new tests will allow for the analysis of trends in water quality.

Draft Decision: 46 COM 7B.23

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.3,
2. Recalling Decisions **44 COM 7B.9** and **45 COM 7B.129**, adopted at its extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021) and extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023) sessions respectively,
3. Notes the recommendations presented by the 2023 joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission, and requests that the State Party implement these recommendations in combination with previous Committee decisions and the recommendations of the 2015 ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission;
4. Also notes that the process to revise the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) was delayed by the extended timeline for the completion of the 2023 Reactive Monitoring mission report and that the former Conservation Strategy remains in force, and requests that the State Party submit the updated CMP to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;
5. Expresses its concern at the reports of encroachment into the buffer zone of the property and encourages the State Party to:
 - a) Prepare detailed maps of the property and its buffer zone for use in the management of the property,
 - b) Clearly demarcate the boundaries of the property and its buffer zone in the physical landscape;
6. Also recalling that the ecological restoration of the primary forest of the property was identified as a principal management goal at the time of inscription and also encourages the State Party to:
 - a) Review past measures for the ecological restoration of the primary forest as part of the process of the revision of the CMP,
 - b) Implement measures to reverse encroachment into the buffer zone and reduction in the primary forest since the time of inscription;
7. Welcomes the State Party's report that the Osun River is not polluted, that action against illegal mining in the region is ongoing, that clean-up actions have been undertaken and that further water quality tests will be undertaken and, also requests that testing be undertaken on a regular basis, and that the outcomes of past and future tests be shared with the World Heritage Centre;
8. Further notes the ongoing discussions regarding the allocation of funding from the annual festival for the conservation of the property and the relocation of the tarmac road from the property and further encourages the State Party to proceed with these discussions with urgency and with the ambition to report to their successful conclusion in its next state of conservation report and to submit details of the alignment of the proposed road, the design of the bridge and plans for downgrading the existing road with the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies before entering into contracts for their implementation;

9. *Also welcomes the documentation process of material maintenance and repairs, considers that reconstruction of sculptures created by Susanne Wenger undermines the authenticity of the property, reiterates its request to refrain from carrying out any non-urgent work on restoration of the sculptures and to halt all reconstruction until a revised conservation methodology and phased conservation plan has been prepared and submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;*
10. *Further welcomes the development of a Conservation Strategy of the sculptural elements of the property, funded through the Kingdom of the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust, further requests that the Conservation Strategy:*
 - a) *Aims to maintain the authenticity of the sculptures of Austrian artist Susanne Wenger over time by giving preference to the application of appropriate conservation methods and materials that halt or slow down processes of decay to avoid replication or reconstruction,*
 - b) *Includes a detailed inventory of all the 20th century sculptures that sets out their form at the time of inscription and any changes since,*
 - c) *Be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies before any further work is undertaken;*
11. *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2025**, 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 48th session.*

24. Stone Town of Zanzibar (United Republic of Tanzania) (C 173rev)

See Document WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.4

ASIA AND PACIFIC

43. Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi (Viet Nam) (C 1328)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 2010

Criteria (ii)(iii)(vi)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger N/A

Previous Committee Decisions see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1328/documents/>

International Assistance

Requests approved: 1 (from 2007-2007)

Total amount approved: USD 29,700

For details, see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1328/assistance/>

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

UNESCO/Japanese Funds-in-Trust project ‘Exploring World Heritage sites in Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam’ (2011-2015)

Previous monitoring missions

July 2023: UNESCO/ICOMOS advisory mission

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

N/A

Illustrative material see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1328/>

Current conservation issues

On 30 January 2024, the State Party has submitted a State of Conservation report, a summary of which is accessible at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1328/documents/>, describing the progress made to address the World Heritage Committee’s recommendation since 2010 and the recent conservation and enhancement challenges, the subject of a joint WHC/ICOMOS Advisory mission, held on 5-9 July 2023.

In 2012, through Decision 696/QD-TTg, the Master Plan for the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long was approved, which became the basis for preserving and enhancing the property.

In 2015, the Detailed plan of conservation, enhancement and promotion of the values of the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long - Hanoi was approved as per decision 975/ QD-BXD.

The Vaxuco Building, currently under renovation, and several ancillary constructions have been transferred under the responsibility of the Management Board of the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long; a roadmap has been agreed upon for the future transfer of other buildings within the Central Sector.

The human resources of Thang Long Citadel Conservation Centre has been strengthened in numbers (from 47 to 168) and qualifications, thanks to training programmes and expertise exchanges.

In January 2024, an updated Management Plan (the previous dating back to 2013) was approved, with an orientation towards 2035, a draft vision for the Central Axis to 2045, and an action plan for 2024-28.

Archaeological investigations have been steadily implemented, yielding movable and immovable findings. In 2022, an International Scientific Conference in Hanoi presented the outcome of 20 years of research. Excavations are also planned for the next decades.

Recent archaeological discoveries include tangible evidence of the main hall of Kinh Thien Palace and its space, have shed light on the historic development within the Central Axis. These findings have encouraged long term proposals for the reconstruction of the main hall and the wider Central Axis. To establish a solid scientific basis for this initiative, further excavations would be needed to better understand this area's historical configurations.

Currently, two 19th-century colonial buildings – the Artillery Building and the War Operations Department Building - stand on top of the royal path and prevent the advancement of archaeological investigations, as non-destructive analyses proved inconclusive. In 2023, the State party expressed its intention to remove a group of buildings including these two buildings and proceed with excavations, as they considered they did not contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and were encroaching upon the Central Axis.

A joint UNESCO/ICOMOS Advisory mission visited the property in July 2023 to assess the feasibility of such proposals. It provided several recommendations, which the State Party has addressed by including documentation concerning:

- Initial overarching vision for the Central Axis within the property;
- Strategy for archaeological research and excavations;
- Identification of attributes of the OUV;
- Proposal for controlled dismantling of the two buildings
- Procedures and standards adopted for the 2D and 3D documentation of the Artillery and War Operations Department Buildings;
- Historical investigation/ documentation and planning for characterization of building techniques and materials of the two buildings;
- An outline of planned future excavations beyond the seven-year plan, after 2030, including the possible reconstruction of Can Chinh Palace;
- A proposal for the envisaged reconstruction of the Main Hall and associated space of Kinh Thien Palace
- Development of an open-air museum at the 18 Hoang Dieu archaeological site with replacement of the current roof, creation of new exhibition spaces and related structures;
- Ongoing project of rehabilitation of the Vaxuco Building to house the Thang Long Imperial Citadel Gallery Project;
- Current protection provisions in the buffer zone, the urban district and the historic centre of Ha Noi, and specific management conditions of the immediate setting of the property.

Following the consultation meetings between the State Party, World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS, the State Party further provided additional information as follows:

- A revised Overarching Vision towards 2034 with an outline of the archaeological strategy;
- A revised analysis of the attributes supporting the OUV of the property, with indication of physical and non-physical elements relating to them, and their location;
- A map and corresponding descriptive list of the existing buildings in the Central Axis, which are also presented in the table of attributes supporting the OUV of the property with location code;
- A consolidated proposal for processing the controlled dismantling of the Artillery and the War Operations Department Buildings

Finally, the State Party indicates in its report that they plan to remove four more colonial buildings (indicated as CT20, CT21, CT24 and CT25) in addition to the two for which a request for a further advisory mission has been made.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM

The State Party has begun acting upon all the recommendations made by the World Heritage Committee at the time of inscription, thus contributing to improving the management conditions of the property and increasing the knowledge and understanding of its OUV through systematic archaeological research and excavations.

A vast programme to enhance the property and the understanding of its OUV is included in the Masterplan for the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long (Decision 696/2012) and in the Detailed plan of conservation, enhancement, and promotion of the values of the Central Sector (decision 975/2015).

Although aimed at improving the property, these plans were approved and their implementation was initiated without prior notification to the World Heritage Committee though they would have a considerable impact on the property if fully implemented. While the State Party deserves to see its commitment to conserving and transmitting the property to future generations acknowledged, the Committee may wish to remind the State Party of the importance of abiding by Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

A project to create a museum in the Vaxuco building is currently ongoing, and plans exist for an open-air museum at the 18 Hoang Dieu site. The Committee is advised to request the prompt submission of the project documentation of these projects.

The July 2023 joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory mission considered the specific request to dismantle the Artillery and War Operations Department Buildings to allow for archaeological investigations to continue and to revive intangible practices associated with the Central Axis area. Given the historical significance of this area for deepening the understanding of both material and immaterial attributes of the property, the relatively ordinary architectural features of the two buildings, compared to other much more refined colonial architecture in Ha Noi, their inappropriate siting and their vulnerable conservation conditions, the Advisory mission concluded that the proposal for dismantling the two above-mentioned buildings “is understandable and could be accepted as a preliminary step towards enhancing the property” along the Central Axis.

The Advisory Mission further recommended that before the actual dismantling of the Artillery and War Operations Department Buildings, and prior to the further development for the potential reconstruction of the main hall of the Kinh Thien Palace as part of the overall presentation of the Central Axis, an overarching “Vision” need to be developed for the Central Axis. This would capture what the State Party wishes to achieve through the Master Plan, in relation to the purpose of the World Heritage Convention to sustain OUV, and how it this can be achieved in line with the Advisory mission’s directives. Such a Vision document needs to be supported by a clearer definition of the attributes of OUV, provision of archaeological and scientific evidence as well as a completed inventory of all buildings in the property. The Vision would need to be considered by the Committee and, if approved, detailed documentation of other buildings to be demolished with the history of their transformations, analysis of building components and materials would need to be provided, before any decisions are made.

The State Party has submitted the Vision towards 2034 that explains the site’s historical and spiritual significance and its desired role in the national and international heritage discourse and presentation. The Vision, with an outline of an archaeological strategy, provides indications on excavations and research needed to elaborate a scientific proposal for the possible reconstruction of the historic spaces. A detailed list of attributes to be safeguarded to preserve OUV, with photographic documentation, description and explanation of how they convey the OUV has been provided, along with a supporting map and descriptive list of standing structures in the Central Axis with their location. This will need augmenting once further archaeological work has been undertaken in order to clarify the relationship between standing buildings and archaeology.

For the Artillery and War Operation Department Buildings (indicated respectively as CT04 and CT17), the State Party has provided detailed documentation that responds to the mission recommendations concerning the preparatory actions needed and a comprehensive proposal for processing the controlled dismantling of these two buildings, including the work site organization. This material includes 2D and 3D documentation, information on the construction and transformation history, as well as analyses of building materials. It is advised that, during the controlled dismantling of the Artillery and War Operation Buildings, further documentation of the two buildings is gathered, organized and archived to facilitate future study. The submitted information fulfils the request of the Advisory mission to ensure that the removal of these buildings does not have a significant impact on the OUV of the property but rather favours the balanced presentation of the attributes and enhances the overall interpretation and valorization of the OUV. The Committee may wish to approve the demolition of these two buildings.

In relation to the longer-term proposals for the Central Axis, in order to support the State Party in its intention to conduct an exemplary process for the overall enhancement of the property, ICOMOS will carry out a technical review of all relevant submitted documents. This, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre, will provide detailed advice to accompany the State Party in further refining the Vision, once the Archaeological Strategy, and Action Plan for developing a Conservation and Presentation Strategy, and a detailed synthesis of all historical, archaeological and scientific sources, and comparative studies, have been submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by it and by ICOMOS, in line with recommendation 2 of the Advisory mission.

Regarding the four additional buildings the State Party wishes to remove, indicated as CT 24, CT25, CT20 and CT21 in *Appendix 4: The layout plan of the Imperial Citadel*, it is noted that CT24 and CT25, located adjacent to the Artillery Building, were considered by the mission not to support OUV. The World Heritage Committee may wish to approve the removal of buildings CT24 and CT25, to facilitate the correct dismantling of the Artillery Building, provided that basic geometrical and photographic documentation of these buildings is carried out. Regarding the small colonial pavilions indicated as CT20 and CT21, not considered to contribute to OUV, it is noted that the map accompanying the above-mentioned decision 975/2015 still included CT20 and CT21 in the initially envisaged enhancement plan. Therefore, the Committee is advised to request that the Vision and Archaeological Strategy are further refined with the guidance and review by the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS before these two buildings are dismantled, after careful geometric and photographic documentation is implemented and reviewed by the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS to facilitate archaeological research on the Central Axis space. Before considering any further requests for the removal of 19th and 20th centuries structures, the World Heritage Committee is advised to request the State Party to transmit the further refined Vision, together with the Archaeological Strategy and Conservation and Presentation Strategy, for presentation to the Committee, following review by the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS and to include in these documents details of which further buildings, if any, will be proposed for dismantling.

Finally, the State Party should be encouraged to continue to pursue dialogue and cooperation among all relevant agencies to secure agreement and commitment by all key actors to expand the buffer zone and use available regulatory measures to ensure that the expanded buffer zone provides the necessary protection to the property and the archaeological potential preserved below ground in the immediate setting of the property.

Draft Decision: 46 COM 7B.43

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.3,*
2. *Takes note with satisfaction of the progress made by the State Party in addressing all Committee's recommendations made at the time of the inscription of the property on the World Heritage List;*
3. *Notes that a vast programme to enhance the property is included in the Masterplan for the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long (Decision 696/2012) and in the Detailed plan of conservation, enhancement and promotion of the values of the Central Sector (decision 975/2015), both of which were approved and their implementation initiated without prior notification to the World Heritage Committee, and that if fully implemented they could have a considerable impact on the property, therefore reminds the State Party of the importance of complying with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;*
4. *Takes note of the State Party's request to dismantle the colonial 19th-century Artillery Building and the War Operations Department Building, which stand on top of the royal path of the Central Axis of the Imperial Citadel, considering the historical significance of these areas for deepening the understanding of both material and immaterial attributes of the property, where archaeological remains of the Vietnamese dynastic palaces and associated structures, including Kinh Thien Palace space, have been unearthed and considers that the dismantling operations can begin following the positive evaluation of the solid documentation provided by the State Party in line with the recommendations of the July 2023 joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory mission and ensuring that further documentation of the two buildings is gathered, organized and archived during the dismantling process to preserve adequate record of the two buildings and facilitate future study;*

5. Takes note with satisfaction of the Vision 2034 proposed by the State Party for the future of the Central Axis of the Imperial Citadel and supports this in principle, subject to further refinement as excavations are undertaken on the site of the demolished buildings, to further development of the Archaeological Strategy, and to the development of a Conservation and Presentation Strategy for the possible restoration/reconstruction of the Central Axis, based on the detailed delineation of the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), and on archaeological and scientific justification, comparative analysis, with these documents being submitted for review of the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS, in line with the recommendations of the 2023 Advisory mission ;
6. Takes note of the request for removing four additional buildings (CT20, 21, 24 and 25 as per Appendix 4 to the State of Conservation Report) and considers that:
 - a) To ensure the proper controlled dismantling of the Artillery and War Operations Department Buildings, the buildings identified as CT24 and CT25 can be removed, provided that basic geometrical and photographic documentation is gathered and archived before removal,
 - b) Before the dismantling of the buildings CT20 and CT21 can proceed, the Vision and the Archaeological Strategy need to be further refined under the guidance of and review by the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS and careful geometric and photographic documentation of these buildings is implemented and reviewed by the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS to facilitate the archaeological research on the Khin Thien Palace's spaces, as well as to enable the continued expression of intangible values as desired by the communities;
7. Further considers that the refined Vision, together with the Archaeological Strategy and the Conservation and Presentation Strategy, when presented to the Committee following review by the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS should contain sufficient information to allow understanding of which further buildings, if any, are proposed for dismantling;
8. Strongly encourages the State Party to establish a coordination mechanism with a view to continue the close dialogue and exchange, by means of consultation, including through meetings and exchange of documents with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS and one or more advisory missions as necessary, before detailed plans are developed to improve the presentation of the Central Axis, after the dismantling of buildings and further excavations and research, and before any irreversible decisions are taken, and to ensure that recommended actions are finalized to the level needed to fulfil their purpose;
9. Requests that available project documentation of the ongoing rehabilitation works at Vaxuco Building and of the planned open-air museum at 18 Hoang Dieu archaeological site be promptly transmitted to the World Heritage Centre for comments by ICOMOS;
10. Encourages the State Party to continue its efforts to establish dialogue and cooperation among all relevant agencies to secure agreement and commitment to expanding the buffer zone so that the necessary protection of the property is guaranteed, and the archaeological potential is preserved below ground in the immediate setting of the property.
11. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2025**, 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.

MIXED PROPERTIES

EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

44. Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region (Albania, North Macedonia) (C/N 99quater)

See Document WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.4

45. Laponian Area (Sweden) (C/N 774)

See Document WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.4

AFRICA

48. Ngorongoro Conservation Area (United Republic of Tanzania) (C/N 39bis)

See Document WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.4

ARAB STATES

49. The Ahwar of Southern Iraq: Refuge of Biodiversity and the Relict Landscape of the Mesopotamian Cities (Iraq) (C/N 1481)

See Document WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.4

NATURAL PROPERTIES

EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

50. Białowieża Forest (Belarus, Poland) (N 33ter)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 1979

Criteria (ix)(x)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger N/A

Previous Committee Decisions see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/33/documents/>

International Assistance

Requests approved: 0

Total amount approved: USD 0

For details, see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/33/assistance/>

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

N/A

Previous monitoring missions

March 2004: joint UNESCO/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission; October 2008, September/October 2018 and March 2024: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring missions; June 2016: IUCN Advisory mission

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- Forestry/wood production (logging in the partially protected zones and removal of deadwood)
- Alterations of the hydrological regime
- Border fence impeding mammal movements
- Ambiguity regarding the boundaries of the property (issue resolved)
- Management systems/management plan (lack of an Integrated Management Plan for the Polish component of the property; lack of a Transboundary Management Plan for the property and of a Transboundary Steering Committee with adequate human and financial resources)

Illustrative material see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/33/>

Current conservation issues

The States Parties of Belarus and Poland submitted separate reports on the state of conservation of the property on 31 January and 29 February 2024 respectively, available at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/33/documents/>, and which report the following:

Belarus:

- The concern expressed by the World Heritage Committee regarding the negative impact of the border barrier constructed by Poland along the Belarusian-Polish border is shared. The report provides details on direct impacts (habitat fragmentation, disruption of transboundary ecological connectivity, tree felling in the border strip, destruction of vegetation) and long-term impacts (blocking of animal migration routes and habitat fragmentation, disturbance of the hydrological regime and natural processes of the rivers, spread of invasive species) on the property;
- Since 2021, all transboundary cooperation on the protection and management of the property has been terminated by the State Party of Poland. There is currently no opportunity to develop a Transboundary Management Plan (TMP) for the property;

- The 2022-2031 Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park (BPNP) Management Plan came into force in 2022;
- A legal ban on wolf hunting in the Belarus component is planned to be adopted in 2024;
- Work has continued to restore the natural flow of the Narevka river and wetland ecosystems in and around the property;
- In 2023, forest management measures included felling for sanitary purposes, fire safety and tourist safety, and timber was only removed in the active forest management zone; 81 low fires were observed; the spread of invasive species continues to be a serious threat, primarily Canadian goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*) observed in 86.4 ha; monitoring of tourism; and restoration of lowland bogs.

Poland:

- It is confirmed that the border barrier constitutes an obstacle to the dispersion of medium-sized and large terrestrial animals, and there is no evidence that animal crossings are effective in ensuring free migration of wild animals (e.g., European bison, lynx, wolves or moose);
- The lack of ecological connectivity is exacerbated by the modernisation of the fence in Belarus (the so-called “Sistema”) and can only be restored in cooperation with the State Party of Belarus, including the need to address illegal human migration affecting the property;
- Since it is presently impossible to ensure ecological integrity, various monitoring, mitigation and compensation measures are proposed. Monitoring will provide recommendations to improve the barrier operating conditions, the mitigation of impacts on wildlife (e.g., lynx), and an ex-post assessment of the impact of the barrier will be undertaken. Recommendations for mitigation measures are being considered and will be submitted to UNESCO in 2025; mitigation measures focus on impacts of the concertina (razor) wire on wildlife. Compensation measures focus on strengthening forest management, including provisions in national law to ensure that decisions related to the property are based on expert knowledge and are consistent with its protection;
- Given the political context and the prevailing situation of human migration on the Polish-Belarusian border, it is not possible to ensure transboundary cooperation to prepare a joint TMP;
- The draft Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for the part of the property in Poland is being revised to consider the impact of the barrier, to bring the proposed revised zoning in line with the recommendations of the 2018 Reactive Monitoring mission, and to revise the fire prevention and suppression plan by the end of 2024;
- The approval of the Forest Management Plans (FMP) for the three forest districts included in the property has been suspended pending the adoption of the IMP, and the provisions of the FMPs are being harmonised with the IMP;
- Further measures are planned to minimize the impacts of the Narewowska road on wildlife and ecological connectivity;
- Since 2021, illegal migration across the border into the part of the property in Poland has increased, leading to anthropogenic pressures;
- Logging activities in 2017 associated with the bark beetle outbreak contributed to the dispersal of invasive species. Increased border protection activity also contributed to the spread of invasive species, with the highest number of invasive plants observed in the area of the border fence.

In September 2023, the State Party of Poland transmitted an impact assessment of the aforementioned border barrier. On 2 February 2024, the World Heritage Centre transmitted IUCN’s review, which concluded that the impact of the border barrier on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property had not been adequately assessed and that further research and monitoring was required to assess ongoing impacts of the border barrier, to determine the efficacy of existing mitigation measures, and to inform the design and implementation of adaptive management and mitigation measures, where necessary, to ensure the long-term conservation of the property’s OUV.

In August 2023, the State Party of Poland invited an IUCN Advisory mission to advise on the finalisation of the Management Plan for the part of the property in Poland, but requested in April 2024 to postpone it to a later date.

The joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission requested by Decision **45 COM 7B.21** visited the property from 18 to 27 March 2024. The mission report will be available at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/33/documents/>.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN

The effective overall management of the property, including the capacity to ensure ecological connectivity across the property is impacted by the political situation and the lack of transboundary cooperation between the State Parties of Belarus and Poland. Regarding the impact of border barrier infrastructure, the Reactive Monitoring mission observed that the border area in the property is now characterized by a succession of infrastructure layers impeding the majority of wildlife movements, which include the new border barrier in Poland (forest netting, a barrier in concertina wire, an 8 m-wide service road, the border barrier itself and a 1 m construction strip where vegetation was removed) and the existing “Sistema” in Belarus (a service road, a plowed fire strip, the electrified barbed wire fence and a second plowed area). The mission considered that the cumulative effects of the establishment of the border barrier in Poland and associated infrastructure are negatively impacting the integrity of the property by blocking ecological connectivity for most wildlife, disturbance of wildlife in and adjacent to the border zone, introduction of invasive species, and localized negative impacts on the hydrology. The new barrier is further exacerbating the impacts of the existing “Sistema”, which already hindered wildlife connectivity without completely blocking it. The mission considered that these impacts on the OUV of the property could result in the property meeting the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger in the near future, if decisive actions are not urgently taken.

To avoid further long-term impacts on the OUV of the property, a set of decisive actions would be needed to fully restore ecological connectivity, which would require at least modifying or partly dismantling the barrier structures and associated infrastructure. It is noted that while the full restoration of ecological connectivity across the entire property has to be the objective, this is unlikely to be feasible in the short- to medium-term whilst transboundary cooperation remains impacted.

It is therefore recommended that the Committee stresses the urgency to take adequate mitigation measures to prevent a further degradation of the ecological integrity of the property and to avoid an ascertained danger to its OUV. This will require a resumption of transboundary cooperation at least at the technical information exchange level to facilitate the development and implementation of the recommended mitigation measures. UNESCO and IUCN, and possibly involving other UN entities, could potentially facilitate a dialogue at the technical level between the States Parties, at their request.

Urgent actions proposed by the mission are included in the draft Decision below. It is further recommended that a new Reactive Monitoring mission be invited to the property in 2027 to assess the implementation of these recommendations and re-evaluate whether the property then meets the criteria for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, as well as to assess the feasibility of implementing additional measures to fully restore the ecological connectivity in the property.

The mission further looked into the other conservation issues identified by the 2018 Reactive Monitoring mission, including management planning, forest and wildlife management, climate change and hydrological restoration, roads and habitat fragmentation and sustainable development at the local level and assessed the progress made in implementing these recommendations. While welcoming the efforts underway to prepare the draft IMP for the part of the property in Poland, the mission considered that further revisions are needed to take into account impacts of the barrier, bring the proposed revised zoning in line with the recommendations of the 2018 mission and revise the fire prevention and suppression plan.

It is also concerning that no progress was made in the development of the TMP for the entire property following the breakdown of transboundary cooperation between Poland and Belarus.

The decision to suspend the approval of the FMPs of the three forest districts included in the property until the adoption of the IMP by the State Party of Poland is welcomed. The process should address the mission’s conclusion that the draft FMP and the 2023 proposed zonation are not in line with the recommendations of the 2018 mission, as the proposed zonation would lead to a reduction of the partial protection zone to the benefit of the active protection zone.

Draft Decision: 46 COM 7B.50

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.3,
2. Recalling Decision **45 COM 7B.21** adopted at its extended 45th session (Riyadh, 2023),
3. Expresses its utmost concern regarding the conclusions of the 2024 joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission that the establishment of the border barrier, associated infrastructure and border security operations in the part of the property in Poland, is exacerbating the impacts of the existing barrier in Belarus, which already hindered connectivity without completely blocking it, and that the succession of border barrier infrastructure is blocking the majority of wildlife movements and has resulted in a loss of ecological connectivity, which threatens the integrity of the property and its biodiversity values, and that these impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property could result in the property meeting the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger in the near future unless decisive urgent actions are taken;
4. Considers that in order to avoid further long-term impacts on the OUV of the property, decisive actions are needed by the States Parties of Belarus and Poland to fully restore ecological connectivity across the entire property and that this would require modifying or partly dismantling the barrier structures and associated infrastructure, however notes with concern that this is unlikely to be feasible in the short - to medium-term whilst transboundary cooperation remains impacted;
5. Urges the State Party of Poland to develop and implement mitigation measures to reduce the impact of the border barrier in Poland, including via:
 - a) Urgent implementation of technical measures to address the localized impacts on the hydrology and allow for a restoration of natural peak water flows, for example by adding more and larger culverts under the barrier wall foundation and adjacent service road, and putting in place dedicated monitoring and human capacity to ensure the culverts function under peak flow conditions,
 - b) Development and timely implementation of a set of actions to support the Polish lynx population in the property to improve habitat quality for increased prey availability combined with reduced noise, light, and road use, and also develop contingency plans to supplement/reintroduce the Polish lynx sub-population as warranted,
 - c) Providing additional funding for monitoring and mitigation measures to suppress the introduction and spread of invasive species, including screening all human activities for invasive species, rapid detection and eradication programmes,
 - d) Establishing dedicated monitoring and adaptive management capacity to mitigate noise and light pollution and edge effects,
 - e) Refraining from the further development of the barrier infrastructure in the property,
 - f) Taking additional measures to increase the resilience of the ecosystem by addressing other stressors on the integrity of the property;
6. Requests the States Parties of Poland and Belarus to resume, to the extent possible, transboundary cooperation, at least at the technical information exchange level, in order to facilitate the development and implementation of the recommended mitigation measures;

7. Further requests the State Party of Poland to establish a comprehensive and long-term research and monitoring programme on the OUV of the property in order to allow for adaptive management of the threats and impacts of the border barrier and its associated infrastructure, and to conduct further research on the impacts of the border barrier and associated infrastructure on the biodiversity and ecological and biological processes of the property, including alternatives to conventional border walls, wildlife passages and other measures to minimise the impacts of the border barrier, concertina fences and associated road infrastructure;
8. Further considers that a new Reactive Monitoring mission would be required in 2027 to assess the implementation of these recommendations, re-evaluate whether the property then meets the criteria for its inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, and to assess the feasibility of implementing additional measures to fully restore the ecological connectivity in the property;
9. Also urges the State Party of Poland to revise the draft Integrated Management Plan to improve clarity and to include core guidance on the overall management principles of the property in order to inform all relevant management documents for the component of the property located in Poland, including Forest Management Plans, to ensure they align with the protection of the property's OUV by including the following:
 - a) Clear guidance statements for addressing threats to the OUV,
 - b) Guidance for integrating border security issues into the overarching capacity to protect the property's OUV,
 - c) A catalogue of active forest management interventions that can be accepted in the active protection zone and the conditions under which they should be applied,
 - d) A comprehensive and long-term research and monitoring programme to allow for adaptive management of threats,and to finalise the draft before the end of 2024 for submission to the World Heritage Centre and review by IUCN;
10. Reiterates its request to the State Party of Poland to ensure that all habitat management operations in the property comply with the management arrangements as described in the 2014 Nomination dossier, including that the undisturbed wild nature is the basic principle for the management, by:
 - a) Ensuring that the new zonation fully complies with the principles detailed in the 2014 nomination dossier and does not result in an increase of the active forest protection zone,
 - b) Ensuring that the new Forest Management Plans include a clear justification for each of the planned forest management interventions, as outlined in the 2024 mission recommendations,
 - c) Revising the proposed Forest Fire Prevention and Suppression Plan prior to its incorporation into the Integrated Management Plan to ensure that any inconsistencies with the recommendations of the 2018 mission and management arrangements described in the 2014 Nomination dossier are resolved;
11. Also requests the State Party of Poland to develop and implement additional measures to further mitigate the impacts of the Narewowska road, including additional restrictions on the use of the road;
12. Further requests the States Parties of Belarus and Poland to implement the other recommendations of the 2024 Reactive Monitoring mission, in particular to:

- a) *Reinitiate the work on developing a Transboundary Management Plan and coordinate transboundary management actions to address the different conservation challenges of the property,*
 - b) *Undertake a new scientific evaluation of bison and red deer ecological carrying capacity for the entire property and implications for management of dispersal, migration and range expansion movements within and outside the property,*
 - c) *Bring wildlife management in the property better in line with undisturbed ecological processes as outlined in the mission recommendations,*
 - d) *Continue and further increase efforts to restore the natural hydrology of the property and include the research, monitoring, and adaptation to climate change as a core guiding principle in all management planning,*
 - e) *Implement measures to further reduce habitat fragmentation by avoiding any further upgrading of roads, significantly reducing the number of forestry roads and the number of forestry fences,*
 - f) *Develop a vision on how the property can contribute to sustainable development of the surrounding region, based on a clear sustainable tourism strategy compatible with the protection of the OUV;*
13. *Finally requests the States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2025**, an updated joint report on the state of conservation of the property, on the implementation of the above and the 2024 mission recommendations, in particular on the urgent measures taken to mitigate the impact of the border barrier infrastructure, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 47th session, **considering that the urgent conservation needs of this property require a broad mobilisation to preserve its OUV, including the possible inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger.***

51. Wadden Sea Denmark, Germany, Netherlands (Kingdom of the) (N 1314ter)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 2009

Criteria (viii)(ix)(x)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger N/A

Previous Committee Decisions see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1314/documents/>

International Assistance

Requests approved: 1 (from 1991-1991)

Total amount approved: USD 5,000

For details, see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1314/assistance/>

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

N/A

Previous monitoring missions

N/A

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- Fishing/collecting aquatic resources
- Water infrastructure
- Marine transport infrastructure

- Buildings and development/major visitor accommodation and associated infrastructure
- Climate change and severe weather events
- Non-renewable energy facilities, renewable energy facilities, major linear utilities

Illustrative material see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1314/>

Current conservation issues

On 14 February 2024, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report, which is available at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1314/documents/>, providing the following information:

- The Single Integrated Management Plan (SIMP) for the property is in its implementation phase, and a Trilateral Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2014), as well as trilateral policy instruments and organisational structures, are in place to support the analysis of climate projections for the property and the integration of climate change adaptation into management. A new thematic report on climate change in the Wadden Sea is expected to be released in 2024;
- Trilateral agreements (including the Wilhelmshaven Declaration, signed in May 2023) do not allow the construction of wind turbines, oil and gas exploration, exploitation and the construction of new oil and gas installations within the boundaries of the property. Nevertheless, these could be permitted in the vicinity of the property (extending also underneath it), in accordance with national regulatory frameworks, if there is reasonable assurance that no significant damage will occur to the unique and vulnerable natural environment;
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands has drafted a legislative proposal to deny new permits for gas and salt extraction under the property. Maps and shapefiles have been submitted to provide an overview of existing and planned natural resource extraction within the property and its wider setting;
- The final decision on the proposed gas extraction project in Ternaard is pending and was expected to be taken before 1 April 2024. The permit is opposed by local governments and the Wadden Sea Area Stakeholder Platform;
- The GEMS project application to develop a gas field exploitation in the Dutch and German parts of the North Sea, outside the property, is pending with the Dutch authorities;
- The 'hand-on-tap' monitoring method used by the Kingdom of the Netherlands for gas and salt extraction is under evaluation. The review will consider new sea level rise scenarios being developed (as sea level is expected to rise at an increasing rate after 2026), which was likely to lead to a change in the 'hand on tap' system in early 2024. A precautionary approach is applied to decisions on the granting of permits for mining activities that take place deep in the subsurface;
- Various scientific studies have been carried out on salt mining and the "acceptable subsidence" associated with the abandonment of salt mining operations. In 2024, an update of a 2015 production plan for salt mining was received by the Dutch Ministry;
- Wintershall Dea's oil production is taking place within an area that was excluded from the German part of the property's boundary during the nomination process (i.e., an exclave). The 2019 application for a new oil drilling field approximately 2,000 metres below the Wadden Sea National Park (to be exploited from the existing 'Mittelplate A' platform outside the property) is still pending a decision. In relation to this application, the company was given a hearing on a draft rejection notice and its response is currently being evaluated. The production licence for the existing 'Mittelplate A' exploitation site is limited until 2041. Germany intends to reduce the area of the existing exclave by submitting a minor boundary modification;
- To meet the EU's renewable energy targets and climate change mitigation goals, the number and density of wind energy projects are increasing in the North Sea. To connect offshore wind farms to the mainland, the States Parties intend to explore possibilities to concentrate cable crossings on a minimum number of cable corridors and to mitigate negative impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). Interregional grid (interconnectors) and hydrogen pipelines crossing the property are also under discussion. For the Netherlands' project to connect an offshore windfarm in the North Sea to the mainland (PAWOZ – Eemshaven programme), the related Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is expected to become available in the second half of 2024, while the programme itself is expected to be adopted before the end of 2024;

- The explicit consideration of the OUV of the property when assessing potential impacts is not a common practice within the respective planning procedures of the States Parties, although EU Directives that cover impacts on Natura 2000 sites show significant overlap with an OUV assessment;
- The development of the joint SEA requested by the Committee will be based on EU legislation, but the suspension of project permitting procedures may not be possible in all cases due to legal rights for timely approval. The States Parties regard the SEA preparation as an opportunity to strengthen the consideration of World Heritage issues by competent authorities and to harmonise national policies on the assessment of cumulative impacts;
- The report also provides information on a list of activities that may have an impact (positive or negative) on the property's OUV, including reduced fisheries activities, visitor management to protect nesting birds, sustainable shipping and ports operations, the Dark Sky Initiative, climate vulnerability assessment, and expansion of Biosphere Reserves.

In addition, on 15 March 2024, the States Parties jointly submitted a letter to the World Heritage Centre in response to concerns raised by several NGOs from Denmark, Germany and the Kingdom of the Netherlands regarding the protection and management of the property, the state of conservation, as well as a legal analysis concluding that OUV is not automatically covered by impact assessments required by Natura 2000 regulations, which had been transmitted to the States Parties on 5 February 2024.

On 29 March 2024, the Kingdom of the Netherlands informed the World Heritage Centre that the gas extraction project at Ternaard will not be permitted for the time being. The supervisory authority considers the risk of subsidence in the Wadden Sea to be too high following new findings on sea level rise. The proposed project is therefore rejected, unless the project proponent can provide additional data to show that extraction is possible without negative impact on the property.

On 24 April 2024, the World Heritage Centre also received updated information on a facility to produce hydrogen and ammonia (Project Hoest) in Esbjerg (Denmark), including an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN

At the extended 45th session, concerns about the potential cumulative impacts of numerous activities and infrastructure developments on the OUV of the property were brought to the attention of the Committee, including extractive activities (oil, salt and gas), port and shipping, and energy infrastructure. Cumulative impacts must also be assessed in the context of climate change, especially noting accelerating sea level rise as one of the property's major threats.

The efforts undertaken by the States Parties to address these challenges are appreciated. Through the Wilhelmshaven Declaration, the States Parties have made a political commitment to enhance the protection of the property and the resilience of the Wadden Sea ecosystem to climate change. The development of the SIMP has established a stronger strategic approach to the long-term preservation of the property. The ongoing update of the climate change report is noted. The report should be submitted to the World Heritage Centre when it becomes available.

The impacts of extractive activities in and near the property on the OUV remain a major concern. The established position that extractive activities and World Heritage status are incompatible should be reiterated. While it is noted that the construction of installations for oil and gas within the property is prohibited under the trilateral agreements, numerous extractive activities are taking place below the property from installations located outside its boundaries, according to the States Parties' information. There are also various extractive activities operating or planned in the property's wider setting. Extractive activities to extract hydrocarbon or salt deposits below the property continue to pose potential adverse impacts on its OUV, through further contributing to sea floor subsidence. Appropriate measures should be taken to address these threats, including a decision not to authorise projects that may contribute to seabed subsidence in the property, and to limit or halt existing salt extraction activities. In this respect, it is noted that the information available on the official website of the Dutch Parliament indicates that the legislative proposal to deny new permits for gas and salt extraction under the property was adopted on 12 March 2024.

As the property has no buffer zone, it is important to recall Paragraph 112 of the Operational Guidelines, which highlights that an effective management approach extends beyond the property to include its wider setting, as its management is related to its role in supporting the OUV of the property. While it is noted that the decision-making processes at the appropriate levels and related impact assessments

within the respective States Parties are consistent with national and EU regulations, it is of concern that they do not systematically consider impacts on the OUV of the property, as required by Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines. Various EIAs which the World Heritage Centre has received (for example Project Hoest a few meters outside the property) do not make any reference to the OUV of the property and are therefore insufficient.

All pending exploration or exploitation projects in the wider setting of the property, including the GEMS project application, should be comprehensively assessed in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context and should only be authorised if such assessments demonstrate that they will not have adverse impacts on the OUV of the property.

The recent decision not to approve the proposed gas extraction project at Ternaard based on the assessment by the supervisory authority that the risk of subsidence in the Wadden Sea was too high in light of new sea-level rise projections is positive. Whilst noting that a final decision on this project is still pending, in view of the risks identified and the potential impact on the OUV of the property, it is recommended that the Committee requests the State Party of the Netherlands to take an unequivocal decision not to approve the project, also in accordance with the legislation adopted on 12 March 2024, not to issue any new gas extraction permits under the property.

Noting that the application by Wintershall Dea for new oil drilling in an area encircled by the property (i.e. the exclave), and which would access oil reserves below the property, is still pending at the time of writing, it is recommended that the application not be approved, in line with the reported draft rejection and the intention to reduce the area of the existing exclave by submitting a minor boundary modification. The latter is welcomed, and it is recommended that the Committee encourage the State Party of Germany to work towards the closure of the exclaves within the property, as contained in the Wilhelmshaven Declaration. In line with this Declaration and the draft rejection of Wintershall Dea's application, it is recommended that the State Party of Germany not grant any new drilling licences or applications for extensions of existing licences in these exclaves.

Given the potential impact of gas and salt extraction activities on the OUV of the property, the ongoing evaluation and updating of the 'hand-on-tap' monitoring method, used by the Netherlands to monitor and approve such activities, to take into account updated sea level rise scenarios is therefore very important.

While it is important to recognise the necessity to accelerate renewable energy production, the increasing number of onshore and offshore energy facilities within the wider setting of the property is an issue of continuing concern. It is positive that the States Parties aim to strategically manage the need for offshore infrastructure to connect cables to the mainland, with the aim of avoiding negative impacts on the attributes of OUV. Therefore, cable routes should be reviewed, and new grid connection routes and installation methods carefully planned, minimising their number by aligning corridors and using areas less important for biodiversity or already affected by other activities. It is noted that the SEA of the PAWOZ-Eemshaven programme has not yet been completed and will need to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN. With regard to onshore wind energy facilities, these should be planned to avoid negative impacts on migratory birds which constitute an important attribute of the OUV.

Recalling concerns regarding the potential cumulative impact of the various ongoing or planned activities within the property and its wider landscape, including the aforementioned extractive and energy infrastructure, as well as port development, shipping routes, dredging and dumping of sediments from dredging outside the property, fisheries, tourism, coastal protection projects, etc., it is appreciated that the joint SEA to assess cumulative impacts of extractive activities and infrastructure developments within and around the property is under development. It is important that the SEA takes into consideration all activities that may contribute to a cumulative impact on the attributes conveying the OUV of the property, and that it is carried out in accordance with the principles of the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, which emphasises that any loss of or damage to OUV is unacceptable, with offsetting considered inappropriate in a World Heritage context. Therefore, the approach of basing the SEA on EU legislation alone may not be sufficient if this does not align with the principles of the Guidance. Defining the baseline for the SEA is a crucial part of this task, therefore it is recommended that the States Parties submit the scoping report of the SEA to the World Heritage Centre for review.

Continued dialogue with the three States Parties on the state of conservation of the property, the effectiveness of the management system put in place to protect and preserve its OUV, the impacts of specific planned and implemented projects related to extractive industries and renewable energy facilities, as well as the progress made in the preparation of the SEA is a priority. In this regard, the

States Parties may wish to convene online or in-person meetings with the World Heritage Centre and IUCN.

Draft Decision: 46 COM 7B.51

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.3,
2. Recalling Decision **45 COM 7B.23**, adopted at its extended 45th session (Riyadh, 2023),
3. Notes with concern the potential cumulative impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property from numerous activities and infrastructure developments planned or established within and in the wider setting of the property, including extractive activities (oil, salt and gas), ports and shipping, and energy facilities, which could be exacerbated by climate change, especially through accelerating sea level rise;
4. Appreciates the efforts of States Parties to address these challenges by strengthening joint strategic management of the property and enhancing its protection and resilience to climate change;
5. Requests the States Parties to jointly adapt and update management measures for the property in the light of the latest scientific data on climate change and to submit the updated thematic report on climate change in the Wadden Sea to the World Heritage Centre as soon as it becomes available;
6. Recalls its established position that extractive activities are incompatible with World Heritage status, and considers that the numerous ongoing and planned extractive activities in the vicinity of the property and its wider landscape, including oil, gas, and salt extraction and associated sea floor subsidence which, in combination with sea level rise, could have a negative impact on the OUV of the property;
7. Also requests the States Parties to:
 - a) Operationalise the measures included in Paragraph 112 of the Operational Guidelines, which highlights that an effective management approach extends beyond the property to include its wider setting, as its management is related to its role in supporting the OUV of the property,
 - b) Align the national legal frameworks related to planning procedures and decision-making with Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines and ensure that impact assessment processes are systematically carried out for proposed projects that may impact on the OUV of the property, in line with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, to fully consider the potential impacts on the property's OUV,
 - c) Not to authorise projects that may contribute to seabed subsidence in the property;
8. Further requests the States Parties to ensure that any extractive projects in the wider setting of the property, including the pending GEMS project application for a gas field exploitation, undergoes an appropriate impact assessment procedure and that the project is not approved if it may cause negative impacts on the OUV of the property;
9. Welcomes the decision by the State Party of the Netherlands not to approve the proposed gas extraction project at Ternaard based on the assessment by the supervisory

authority that the risk of subsidence in the Wadden Sea was too high in light of new sea-level rise projections, and urges the State Party of the Netherlands to take an unequivocal decision not to approve the project, also in accordance with the legislation adopted in March 2024, not to issue any new gas extraction permits within and under the property;

10. Also welcomes the reported draft rejection of the pending application by Wintershall Dea for oil extraction below the property from an exclave encircled by the property, and requests furthermore the State Party of Germany not to grant final approval to this application, in accordance with the draft rejection and the State Party's commitment under the Wilhelmshaven Declaration to work towards the closure of exclaves within the property, and therefore not to grant any new extractive activities within these exclaves;
11. Further welcomes the ongoing evaluation by the State Party of the Netherlands of the 'hand-on-tap' monitoring method in order to consider updated sea-level rise scenarios and reiterates its request that, in accordance with the precautionary principle, no further extractive projects be approved, and that consideration is given to limiting or halting existing salt extraction activities, as required, to effectively maintain and protect the OUV;
12. Acknowledges the importance and necessity to accelerate renewable energy production, nevertheless, notes with serious concern the increasing number of onshore and offshore energy facilities (e.g., wind) within the wider setting of the property, and requests moreover the States Parties to:
 - a) Adopt a joint strategic and systematic approach to the planning and implementation of projects to connect offshore infrastructures with the mainland, with the aim of avoiding negative impacts on the OUV of the property,
 - b) Ensure that the planning and implementation of onshore energy facilities (e.g., wind) avoid negative impacts on migratory bird pathways and habitats;
13. Requests furthermore the State Party of the Netherlands to ensure the timely submission of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the PAWOZ-Eemshaven programme, as soon as it is available, to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN;
14. Further appreciates the updated information on the requested joint SEA to assess the cumulative impacts of extraction and infrastructure developments within and around the property, and requests moreover the States Parties to:
 - a) Ensure that the focus of the SEA is on the potential impacts on the attributes which convey the OUV of the property, as well as other heritage/conservation values, in accordance with the principles of the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context,
 - b) Submit the scoping report of the SEA to the World Heritage Centre for review;
15. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2025**, 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.

52. Lake Baikal (Russian Federation) (N 754)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 1996

Criteria (vii)(viii)(ix)(x)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger N/A

Previous Committee Decisions see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/754/documents/>

International Assistance

Requests approved: 2 (from 1990-2000)

Total amount approved: USD 33,200

For details, see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/754/assistance/>

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

N/A

Previous monitoring missions

1997: World Heritage Centre mission; 1998: World Heritage Centre monitoring mission; 2001, 2005 and 2023: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring missions; 2003 and 2011: joint UNESCO/IUCN high-level missions; 2015: IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- Gas and oil pipeline project across the World Heritage property in 2006 (issue resolved)
- Management Systems/Management Plan (lack of adequate management system)
- Legal framework (uncertain legal protection)
- Pollution from paper mill and domestic and industrial wastewater
- Land use and use of natural resources (timber harvesting, construction on the lake shore, sale of land)
- Impacts of tourism/visitor/recreation (large scale tourism development)
- Fire and impacts of climate change (wildfires in the Baikal region in 2015)
- Planned and existing dam infrastructure in the Russian Federation and Mongolia affecting Lake Baikal water regime

Illustrative material see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/754/>

Current conservation issues

On 31 January 2024, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report, available at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/754/documents/> and summarized below, responding to Committee Decision **45 COM 7B.24**:

- A three-stage scientific study of the environmental and socio-economic impacts of changes in the water level of Lake Baikal was completed in December 2023, with the aim of informing the permanent regulation of the Irkutsk hydropower dam, which is yet to be determined. This would replace the temporary regulation in place since 2016, which increased the water level variation to 2.3 m compared to the 1 m range established in 2001;
- Measures have been taken to ensure the legality of the tourism and other capital construction facilities in the property, under the responsibility of the General Prosecutor's Office and in coordination with the regional authorities;
- The management of the property consists of two main directions: the legislative framework for State environmental monitoring of the Lake Baikal ecosystem and the implementation of this monitoring, which has been strengthened;
- 29 resident companies are operating in the two special economic zones (SEZ) of tourist-recreational type within the property, 'Baikal Harbour' and 'Baikal Gateway', where more than 48 infrastructure facilities have been built or commissioned with government funds;

- Works to eliminate accumulated environmental damage caused by the Baikalsk Pulp and Paper Mill (BPPM) have continued, with Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) approved for two of the three industrial waste storing sites, while further research is needed to determine solutions for the third site;
- Forest areas affected by fires have decreased since 2015, and fire protection measures have improved;
- The status of wildlife and activities in the specially protected areas located within the property are presented, with the population status of the Baikal omul remaining significantly worse than the long-term average;
- The federal project 'Preservation of Lake Baikal' continues to provide significant funding for priority actions to protect the property and to reduce anthropogenic pressure, including through the improvement of wastewater treatment facilities;
- A review of the legal and regulatory framework for the protection of Lake Baikal and the Baikal Natural Area, as well as a table of proposed amendments to the Federal Law 'On the Protection of Lake Baikal' (Baikal Law) are annexed to the report.

In a letter from the Minister of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia to the World Heritage Centre dated 30 January 2024, the State Party of Mongolia confirms that it has abandoned the Shuren and Orkhon river hydropower dam projects and intends to proceed only with the Egiin Gol hydropower plant, which will be subject to an EIA developed in accordance with international standards.

The joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property took place from 12 to 16 December 2023 and its report will be available at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/754/documents/>.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN

Based on the findings of the 2023 Reactive Monitoring mission, the World Heritage Centre and IUCN conclude that the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property faces significant ascertained and potential threats. The environmental condition of the property is deteriorating, notably due to the long-term degradation of the water quality of Lake Baikal, illustrated by the development of unprecedented algal blooms and bacterial pollution, the presence of polluting chemical substances in the water and increasing plastic pollution, and the decline of certain endemic species that are bio-indicators of the health of the lake. The mission also noted risks to the integrity of the terrestrial part of the property due to fires and forest management practices. The mission concluded that the anthropogenic pressures persist and are increasing due to pollution, land-use pressures and a weakening regulatory regime on lake water levels, posing an increasing threat to the property's OUV. Climate change could further exacerbate the effects of these threats. Moreover, plans for SEZs and growth in the tourism sector are accelerating without sufficient coordination, assessment of their cumulative impacts on the property's OUV, and planning for environmental management.

The uncertain and weakened legal protection of the property is a major additional risk, which the Committee has identified as a serious concern that may warrant the inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger (Decision **45 COM 7B.24**). New changes, as currently proposed, to the Federal Law 'On the Protection of Lake Baikal' do not provide sufficient guarantees for the preservation of the property's OUV and are therefore not compatible with its protection requirements. The study of legislative changes submitted by the State Party is incomplete, as it does not include details of all legal amendments adopted to date and an assessment of their impact on the property's OUV, and should therefore be completed. The State Party should not adopt the proposed legal changes to modify the Baikal Law, but should assess their impacts on the property and its OUV prior to approval and their review by the Committee.

At the same time, the mission observed that the State Party is taking important remedial actions to reverse the environmental deterioration of the property. These positive measures include the endorsement of strategic priorities for the preservation of Lake Baikal and its environmental rehabilitation, for which significant federal and regional funding has been allocated, including to improve monitoring of the property and to strengthen wastewater treatment infrastructure. Work has also commenced to eliminate the accumulated environmental damage of the BPPM, a major undertaking considering the large amount of hazardous industrial waste stored on the lake shore. The mission also reported progress in completing the scientific assessment to study the environmental and socio-economic impacts of changes in the water level of Lake Baikal, which should eventually lead to an

updated legal framework for regulating the water level of the lake that is fully compatible with the protection of the property's OUV.

The mission therefore recommended to the Committee not to inscribe the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger at its 46th session. However, serious efforts are needed to intensify the remedial actions to halt and reverse the current deteriorating trend of the property's state of conservation. It is therefore recommended that the Committee endorse the recommendations of the 2023 mission, which provide further guidance on the actions needed, and reiterate the Committee's previous requests for the development of an Integrated Management Plan for the property, among other outstanding requests. It is recommended that a new joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission be invited to the property in 2026 to assess whether the threats affecting its state of conservation have been sufficiently addressed, whether the degradation of the OUV of the property has been reversed, and whether the property meets the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in accordance with Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines. The mission should be organised in the summer to be able to assess key issues related to tourism development, pollution, land use pressures and management, including forest management.

The mission also observed that the procedures for adopting the Retrospective Statement of OUV for the property and its Retrospective Inventory of boundaries are still pending, and recommended that these outstanding activities be addressed.

The confirmation by the State Party of Mongolia that it has abandoned two of the three hydropower projects located on the Selenge River and its tributaries is noted with satisfaction. It is positive that the State Party of Mongolia commits to develop an updated EIA of the Egiin Gol project in accordance with international standards and the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, which should include an assessment of the potential impacts of the project on the Selenga catchment area and therefore its delta, which is located within the property and is recognised as being a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. While this means that it is no longer necessary to assess the cumulative impacts of the three projects originally planned on the territory of Mongolia, the States Parties of the Russian Federation and Mongolia should continue to cooperate on the sustainable management of the shared Lake Baikal watershed, the majority of which is located in Mongolia.

Draft Decision: 46 COM 7B.52

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.3,*
2. *Recalling Decisions **44 COM 7B.107** and **45 COM 7B.24** adopted at its 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021) and 45th (Riyadh, 2023) extended sessions respectively,*
3. *Notes with utmost concern the conclusion of the 2023 joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission that the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property faces significant ascertained and potential threats due to the long-term degradation of the water quality of Lake Baikal, persistent and increasing anthropogenic pressures, notably related to pollution and tourism development as well as irregular legal protection and lack of integrated management;*
4. *Reiterates its concern at the weakening of the legal protection of the property at a time when the property's ecological condition continues to deteriorate, which could place the property in potential danger in accordance with Paragraph 180(b) i) and iv) of the Operational Guidelines, and urges the State Party to secure and stabilise the property's legal status to protect its OUV and to avoid any legal modifications that may lead to potential deleterious effects;*
5. *Welcomes the development of the study to assess the environmental and socio-economic impacts of the water level regime of Lake Baikal, requests the State Party to*

submit the study to the World Heritage Centre and to make it available on the Lake Baikal ecological portal and also urges the State Party to elaborate by the end of 2024, detailed proposals to adapt the current water level regulations of Lake Baikal to be compatible with the protection of the property's OUV and to submit these proposals to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN;

6. Also welcomes the progress made towards eliminating the accumulated environmental damage of the former Baikalsk Pulp and Paper Mill (BPPM) and reiterates its request to the State Party to apply the highest environmental standards in the selection and application of technological solutions in these works and to ensure regular risk assessment, audited environmental monitoring and reporting to the public and the Committee;
7. Also reiterates its request to the State Party to provide details of all major development initiatives within the property, to ensure that they are subject to Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) developed in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context and submitted to the World Heritage Centre, and to conduct a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in each Special Economic Zone (SEZ) to assess and mitigate the cumulative impacts of the existing and proposed activities on the property's OUV before taking any decision that would be difficult to reverse;
8. Acknowledging that the State Party is taking remedial action to halt and reverse the deterioration of the property's OUV and state of conservation, requests furthermore the State Party to intensify these efforts and to implement all recommendations of the 2023 mission, including to:
 - a) Complete the review of past legal changes and assess the impact on the property and its OUV of the proposed additional changes to the Baikal Law, prior to approval of these amendments and their review by the Committee,
 - b) Minimise and work towards eliminating all major sources of pollution in Lake Baikal and its watershed,
 - c) Conduct a SEA of the Baikalsk Master Plan and ensure full compatibility with World Heritage requirements,
 - d) Elaborate and implement a clear and comprehensive plan and programme of activities for fire management and forest ecosystem restoration,
 - e) Develop an integrated management plan for the property,
 - f) Finalise the Retrospective Statement of OUV for the property and submit it to the World Heritage Centre together with the map of the boundaries of the World Heritage property as part of the Retrospective Inventory;
9. Considers that unless these actions are urgently implemented to halt the ongoing degradation of the property's OUV, **the property's urgent conservation needs may require a broad mobilisation to preserve its OUV, including the possible inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger;**
10. Also notes with satisfaction the decision of the State Party of Mongolia to abandon the Shuren and Orkhon river dam projects located in the Selenge watershed and the State Party of Mongolia's plan to proceed only with the Egiin Gol hydropower plant, which will be subject to an EIA in accordance with international standards and the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, further requests the State Party of Mongolia to ensure that this EIA includes measures to mitigate the impact of the project on the Selenga ecosystem and is submitted to the World Heritage Centre for

review by IUCN prior to any decision, and further requests the States Parties of the Russian Federation and Mongolia to continue to cooperate on the sustainable management of the shared Lake Baikal watershed;

11. Requests furthermore the State Party to invite a new Reactive Monitoring mission to the property in 2026, during the summer season, to assess the progress made in reversing the degradation of the OUV of the property and in addressing the threats affecting its state of conservation, notably legal protection, tourism development, pollution, land use pressures and management, including forest management, and to assess whether the property meets the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger;
12. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2025**, a progress report on the implementation of the above, including the recommendations of the 2023 Reactive Monitoring mission, and by **1 December 2025**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 48th session.

AFRICA

59. Serengeti National Park (United Republic of Tanzania) (N 156)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 1981

Criteria (vii)(x)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger N/A

Previous Committee Decisions see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/156/documents/>

International Assistance

Requests approved: 4 (from 1989-1999)

Total amount approved: USD 59,500

For details, see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/156/assistance/>

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

N/A

Previous monitoring missions

November 2010: Joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission, January 2024: Joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- Potential impacts of a hydro-electric project in Kenya
- Reduced and degraded water resources
- Water infrastructure
- Potential impact of optical cables' installation
- Air transport infrastructure
- Ground transport infrastructure
- Illegal activities, including poaching
- Tourism infrastructure

Illustrative material see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/156/>

Current conservation issues

On 24 February 2024, the State Party submitted a report on the state of conservation of the property, available at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/156/documents/>, which provides the following information:

- During the joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission, which visited the property from 15 to 19 January 2024, the State Party of Kenya representative has confirmed that the proposal for dams on the Mara river was developed by NELSAP but that no further discussion and commitments have been made to implement these projects;
- The development of a Joint Water Allocation Plan (JWAP) for the Mara basin between Tanzania and Kenya will be coordinated through the Lake Victoria Basin Commission Secretariat of the East African Community;
- The inclusion of the Speke Gulf into Serengeti National Park has been approved and a programme of voluntary relocation of the affected communities with compensation based on Tanzanian laws is underway. A boundary modification request will be submitted thereafter;
- Confirmation that the stretch of the northern road traversing the property from Tabora B to Klein's Gate will remain under the management of Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA) and maintained as a gravel road for tourism and administrative duties;
- The proposed golf course at Fort Ikoma has been subject to a full Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre after certification;

- All tourism accommodation facilities in the property have been strategically planned and implemented following the General Management Plan (GMP).

On 6 December 2023, the World Heritage Centre sent a letter to the State Party of Kenya informing them about the planned joint Reactive Monitoring mission in January 2024 and requesting an official update on the status of the dam projects on the Mara river. To date, no official written response was received.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN

The Reactive Monitoring mission concluded that the different attributes which underpin the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property are being maintained and that the State Party should be commended for the important efforts it has undertaken in implementing the 2010 Reactive Monitoring mission recommendations. The “northern road” project, which constituted a major threat to the OUV of the property, has been abandoned and the southern bypass is under construction. The addition of the Speke Gulf area, providing wildlife access to the permanent water source of Lake Victoria is underway. Both initiatives require substantial investments, which are entirely born by the national budget, and indicate the commitment of the State Party to the conservation of the property. The 2024 mission report further welcomed the significant work undertaken since 2010 to strengthen law enforcement, address human wildlife conflicts, control and manage invasive alien species, and develop a clear strategy for the management of fires. While noting efforts to further improve engagement with local communities, the importance of ensuring a participatory human rights-based approach for the protection and management of the property in line with international best practice standards, needs to be further stressed. This is particularly important in relation to the voluntary resettlement of communities in the Speke Gulf area that is proposed for inclusion into the national park.

Despite these positive developments, the mission expressed concern about the long-term integrity of the property, which is dependent on the ecological health of the wider transboundary landscape of the Greater Serengeti Mara Ecosystem (GSME), which extends into Kenya. Recent research clearly documents that the pressure on the natural resources in and around the GSME has increased substantially over the past decades, resulting in edge effects and spatial compression of wildlife across the GSME. To address these increasing external pressures on the GSME, transboundary management strategies need to be developed and transboundary cooperation improved between the two States Parties. In the Tanzanian part of the GSME, the coordination between the different agencies responsible for the protected areas also needs to be increased.

The mission was especially concerned by changes in the hydrology of the transboundary Mara River due to catchment degradation and water abstraction. The Mara River provides crucial access to water for migrating herbivores during the dry periods, within a large area, providing ample and available grassland. The mission concluded that the potential construction of a series of upstream dams in Kenya would inevitably result in significant modifications of the Mara River flow and could potentially have devastating impacts on the OUV of the property. This includes the risk of significant mortality of large numbers of wildebeest and other herbivores in years of drought, and possible collapse of the migration if such drought periods occurred over several consecutive years. While at this stage, there appear to be no plans to proceed with the proposed dam projects, it is recommended that the Committee request again the State Party of Kenya to officially confirm this. The proposed joint water allocation plan for the transboundary Mara River needs to be developed urgently to ensure Minimum Environmental Flows as established by the Environmental Flows Assessment.

The mission also expressed concerns about the growing impacts of tourism inside the property. While noting the information that tourism infrastructure is strategically planned and implemented following the GMP, the proposed growth of tourism facilities foresees increasing the number of lodges by 250% and permanent tented camps by 300%, and expanding the footprint of human use across the property. The mission considered that the large, planned increase in tourism facilities, including in the low use and wilderness zone is of serious concern, given the increasing evidence that the current tourism footprint is already starting to impact the OUV of the property. It is recommended that the revision of the GMP and decisions on future tourism development should be informed by the best available science in order to revise the management zones and permissible use in these zones. This should include setting measurable and monitorable limits of acceptable change, particularly in the behavior, demographics and population of the migrating wildebeest, zebra and gazelle. The mission considers that, given the fact that the wildebeest migration is central to the OUV of the property, the acceptable limit of change in these aspects of the wildebeest population should be ‘zero change’.

The mission further noted with concern that the proposed golf development at Fort Ikoma is likely to create a new obstacle for the herbivore migration in an area where the migration corridor is already under pressure from increasing development in the Serengeti district and concluded that the EIA has not adequately assessed the potential impact of the proposed project on the migration, and that this project should not proceed at the present time. The EIA requires revision to align with the necessary World Heritage standards, including a comprehensive assessment of impacts on migration, and the evaluation of alternative locations prior to any further decision on this project.

In order to address the above-mentioned challenges and to avoid that the OUV of the property would be jeopardized, the mission proposed several further recommendations on current development proposals and approaches, of which the most important ones have been included in the draft Decision below.

Draft Decision: 46 COM 7B.59

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.3,*
2. *Recalling Decision **45 COM 7B.76** adopted at its extended 45th session (Riyadh, 2023),*
3. *Welcomes the conclusion of the 2024 joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission that the different attributes which underpin the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property are being maintained and commends the State Party for the significant efforts it has undertaken in implementing the 2010 mission recommendations;*
4. *Notes with appreciation that the State Party confirms its commitment that the stretch of the northern road traversing the property from Tabora B to Klein's Gate will remain under the management of Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA) and maintained as a gravel road for tourism and administrative duties and that the southern bypass road is under construction;*
5. *Requests the State Party of Kenya to confirm that the proposed dam projects upstream of the property in the Mara River basin in Kenya, which could have a negative impact on the OUV of the Serengeti National Park and Kenya Lake System in the Great Rift Valley World Heritage properties will not go forward, and also requests the State Party to develop together with the State Party of Kenya the planned Joint Water Allocation Plan (JWAP) as soon as possible to ensure Minimum Environmental Flows as established by the Environmental Flows Assessment;*
6. *Further requests the State Party to ensure that the proposed expansion of the Serengeti National Park to include the ecologically important Speke Gulf is implemented effectively and equitably, and ensure that any planned resettlement of people follows a human-rights based approach in line with international best practice and norms and that full and just compensation is provided to the people being resettled;*
7. *Noting that the pressure on the natural resources in and around the wider transboundary landscape of the Greater Serengeti Mara Ecosystem (GSME) has increased substantially over the past decades, expresses concern about the long-term integrity of the property, which is dependent on the ecological health of GSME, and requests furthermore:*
 - a) *The States Parties of the United Republic of Tanzania and Kenya to establish a formal transboundary cooperation of the GSME in order to address these pressures,*

- b) *The State Party of Tanzania to develop an overall management plan for the protected areas included in the Tanzanian part of GSME, as part of the preparation of a management plan for the Serengeti – Ngorongoro Man and Biosphere Reserve, and to establish a permanent management coordination mechanism between the TANAPA, Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA) and Tanzania Wildlife Authority (TAWA) to facilitate its implementation;*
8. *Further expresses concern about the growing impacts of tourism inside the property and noting the conclusion of the mission that there is increasing evidence that the current tourism footprint is already starting to impact the OUV of the property, urges the State Party to ensure that the revision of the General Management Plan (GMP) and decisions on future tourism development should be informed by the best available science, including in setting measurable and monitorable limits of acceptable change (LAC), particularly in the behavior, demographics and population of the migrating wildebeest, zebra and gazelle;*
9. *Requests moreover the State Party to develop a scientific rationale for the management zonation of the property, the permissible use in the different zones, and the establishment and implementation of the LAC, based on the best available science and knowledge in preparation of the planned revision of the GMP and ensure that the next GMP considers the following key points:*
- a) *Ensure the management of the property is underpinned by an analysis of its OUV as documented in the Statement of OUV for the property,*
- b) *Includes an improved monitoring system by defining quantifiable baselines, thresholds, and metrics for measuring change and outcomes,*
- c) *Provides effective mechanisms for community participation and includes best practices for ensuring fair and equitable governance including transparency, and appropriate grievance mechanisms,*
- d) *Is informed by a Strategic Environmental Assessment to ensure it considers the local socio-economic contexts and priorities, and considers the cumulative impacts of tourism,*
- e) *Ensures sufficient staffing and funding that is guaranteed from the national budget but also allows for revenue retention,*
- f) *Is approved at Ministerial Level and fully implemented and enforceable,*
10. *Notes with concern that the proposed golf development at Fort Ikoma is likely to impact the wildebeest migration and also urges the State Party not to proceed with the project and to revise the current Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), to assess the feasibility of alternative locations, to comprehensively assess the potential impact of the development on the migration in the area, including whether this impact can be adequately mitigated, in line with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context;*
11. *Requests furthermore the State Party to implement the other recommendations of the 2024 Reactive Monitoring mission, in particular:*
- a) *Once the southern bypass road is completed, to divert further traffic away from the property by downgrading the status of the Karatu – Nyamusa road as a trunk road to a park road, closing it for heavy transit traffic from Arusha to Musoma and by disincentivizing other vehicle transit traffic,*
- b) *Postpone the implementation of the road hardening project Goleni – Seronera - Fort Ikoma within the property, in order to link the timeframe of the project to the*

completion of the Lodoare – Goleni stretch in Ngorongoro Conservation Area World Heritage property, and the finalization of the southern bypass road,

- c) Limit the development of the Mugumu airport to a regional airport for light aircraft only, with a 1.2 km gravel runway in order to divert the tourism flight traffic away from the Seronera and Kogatende airstrips inside the property, closing these for tourism traffic,*
 - d) Provide as soon as possible a more detailed report and overview of the progress of current infrastructure development applications within the property, ensure that all EIAs are prepared in line with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context to assess the potential impacts on the OUV and are submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN prior to making any decision to authorize construction in line with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;*
12. ***Finally requests** the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2025**, 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 48th session.*