

On the State of Conservation of the UNESCO World Heritage Property *Golden Mountains of Altai (Russian Federation) in 2014*

1. Response of the Russian Federation with regard to Resolution No. 37 COM 7B.25 adopted by the World Heritage Committee

At present, no design works on the Altai pipeline project are in progress and no allocation of funds is expected for further design activities. Design documents for this pipeline section are not being developed, including the chapters related to the EIA of planned business operations.

On March 22, 2013, Russia and the People's Republic of China signed the Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in pipeline gas deliveries to China via the eastern route. No provisions related to performing the works on the Altai project according to agreements with the Chinese party are made.

A UNESCO mission of experts has twice visited all five Altai properties inscribed on the World Heritage List, namely: Katunskiy and Altai Nature Reserves, Ukok Plateau, Belukha Mountain and Lake Teletskoye.

Following the results of UNESCO's mission of 2012, the experts have determined that UNESCO World Heritage property *Golden Mountains of Altai* that was in pretty good state during the visit of the previous mission in 2007 is still in the same perfect condition at the moment.

The Government of the Altai Republic is interested in the conservation of unique natural sites located on the territory of Belukha and Ukok Quiet Zone National Parks, understands its responsibility for natural heritage conservation and acts comprehensively in the best interest of population of the Republic of Altai and Russia.

One of the main activities to ensure protection of the sites being part of the UNESCO World Heritage property The Golden Mountains of Altai and spreading the idea of their development was an appeal on behalf of the Government of the Altai Republic to Chairman of the Russian Committee for UNESCO S. V. Lavrov regarding the opportunity of The Golden Mountains of Altai property extension as a result of including archeological mounds (Pazyryk burials) of the Republic of Altai in its territory and requalification of The Golden Mountains of Altai nomination into a mixed natural and cultural property.

Adoption of Resolution No. 202 "On Introducing Changes in Resolution Issued by the Government of the Republic of Altai" as of August 02, 2012 by the Government of the Republic of Altai related to the opportunity of construction, reconstruction and overhaul maintenance of linear facilities (systems of linear infrastructure) and also structures being an integral process part of the mentioned facilities, provided that environmental actions are taken to reduce a negative impact on natural complexes and their components based on design documents having received a positive opinion of the State Environmental Expert Review, does not constitute any danger to the integrity of the Ukok Plateau's ecosystem as this Resolution in itself cannot have any adverse effects on the environment for it is not connected to any definite natural properties. The Resolution did not affect Belukha National Park where Mount Belukha is located.

Please, also be informed that there are no plans related to linear facilities construction on the Ukok Plateau.

2. Information about other current issues related to the World Heritage property conservation

Climate change is the most important factor contributing to the changes of natural ecosystems existing in Altai reserves. For the Central Altai territory, such climate changes may be described as follows: in recent 50 years, the average annual temperature has risen by 2.1⁰C in intermountain basins and by 1.45⁰C in the highlands.

Eco-educational tourism is one of the factors related to man-induced impact on the territory of Katunskiy Nature Reserve.

The routes were provided with the primary necessary facilities: stopping places have been arranged, some trail sections have been paved. Based on long-term observations over recreational impact on the reserve's natural ecosystems, quotas on the number of tourists visiting the reserve have been set, with 2,000 people per season being allowed. At the same time, 801 tourists visited the reserve in 2014. The results of monitoring related to the recreational impact on the territory of the reserve indicate that the impact is local and does not exceed self-restoring capacities of natural complexes.

Among the threats which may potentially arise for the outstanding universal value of the territory with a status of the World Heritage property one should definitely mention the plan on mini hydropower plant (MHPP) construction on the Multa River. This initiative has already been discussed for three years. According to the information obtained in the Ministry for Regional Development of the Republic of Altai, with a reference to investor Altai Generating Company (ZAO), the project for MHPP construction on the Multa River has been developed and will be submitted for the State Environmental Expert Review in the end of January 2015. Neither administration of the reserve nor regional authorities nor the Ministry for Regional Development of the Republic of Altai have at their disposal design documents and information related to the possible impact of the project on the territory of the World Heritage property.

As of the end of 2014, security officers revealed 14 violations of the reserve status. Most violations were related to unauthorized transit of tourist groups through the reserve's territory and, therefore, they have no significant negative impact on natural complexes of the reserve.

Monitoring with regard to the condition of natural complexes and their components has been performed in Katunskiy Nature Reserve since 1998. Since 2004, the Program for climate and ecosystem changes monitoring in the reserve and on adjacent territories focused on the arrangement of cross observations over changes in meteorological parameters and related changes in biota has been implemented.

From a methodological point of view, the program is based on GLOCHAMORE research strategy (Global changes in mountain biosphere reserves) and focused on the application of international monitoring protocols.

At present, the following types of monitoring are carried out in the reserve: hydrometeorological monitoring, monitoring the number of large mammal species (since 1999). Monitoring results show that the number of large mammal species on the territory of the reserve is stable. Since 2011, the reserve has used the following for monitoring purposes: trail cameras, monitoring natural complexes condition with the help of eco-educational routes of the reserve, glacier monitoring, alpine ecosystems monitoring, forest line monitoring, syndynamics monitoring, geochemical and hydrological monitoring.

As climate change is one of significant threats for biodiversity of this high mountain territory, main principles and provisions for the adaptation to this change have been developed in the reserve in the fields as follows: capacity building with regard to natural fires prevention and extinguishing, reduction of non-climate risks for vulnerable species and ecosystems, development of a system for cross monitoring the climate and ecosystem changes, promotion of renewable sources of energy, provision of conditions for unrestricted migration of mammal species, implementation of educational and interpretative programs related to climate change issues for various target groups.

Transboundary cooperation with Katon-Karagay National Park (Republic of Kazakhstan) was initiated in 2004 and is carried out within the framework of the Concept for cross-border cooperation of Russia. On September 15, 2011, an intergovernmental agreement for the establishment of Altai Transboundary Reserve based on Katunskiy Biosphere Reserve and Katon-Karagay National Park (Kazakhstan) was signed.

According to the document, the following objectives for a transboundary SPA creation were determined: conservation of biological and landscape diversity in the mountain region of

Altai; fostering bilateral cooperation related to environmental protection and efficient use of natural resources with environmental, social and cultural aspects being taken into account; performance of environmental monitoring and studies of natural complexes and sites; promotion of ecological awareness among the population and improvement of eco-tourism.

In 2013–2014, the project involving analysis of threats for the conservation of biodiversity and development of a management plan for Altai Transboundary Reserve was implemented.

Altai Reserve is also managed and developed according to the Strategy for Management and Development of the UNESCO World Heritage property *The Golden Mountains of Altai* (2009).

To attract additional resources, Altai Reserve provides conditions to develop managerial partnerships between all stakeholders.

Defining a partnership as joint efforts of the parties focused on the achievement of their common objective, administration of the reserve relies on such key principles as solidarity of purpose, openness, equality of partners, mutual benefit, respect and responsibility.

For the period between 2007 and 2014, Altai Reserve's administration ensured transformation of the role and functions of Altai Reserve from a strictly protected SPA to the biosphere territory (reserve) of sustainable development and conservation of landscape/ cultural diversity through cooperation with local people and business (and other stakeholders):

A public relations (PR) program was one of the first steps of the selected strategy; as part of the program, target groups for communication and cooperation have been defined. A press center (publishing more than 100 themed press releases on an annual basis) and media club *The Unrestricted Commandment* affiliated with Altai Biosphere Reserve have been established (since 2009, 6 themed press tours have been organized for journalists on the territory of the Biosphere Reserve);

Project activities were the first mode of cooperation with locals: 7 grant projects focused on supporting the local community and creating conditions for its sustainable social and economic growth have been developed and implemented;

The management of Altai Biosphere Reserve assigns great importance to the local population in the management and development of the reserve. Social councils have been created within the framework of preserved settlements (located in the central area of the biosphere reserve), i.e. Yailyu and Bele. In February 2014, a local self-governing body *Zapovednoye Selo* was registered in Yailyu settlement;

Lake Teletskoye Council has been created: a dialogue that was established between the government, travel business, public representatives, research institute and biosphere reserve and resulted in business, friendly and partnership relations. Lake Teletskoye Council became a definite platform for communication and interaction of different organizations that are located on Lake Teletskoye and aware of their responsibility for conservation and development of the territory being a UNESCO World Heritage property. Thus, with the participation of Lake Teletskoye Council, green tourist infrastructure is formed on Lake Teletskoye and adjacent territories; development of eco-friendly water transport is supported;

Altai-Sayan Mountain Partnership (founders — Altai and Katunskiy Nature Reserves, Chairman of the Partnership — Igor Kalmykov) has been established. The purpose of the Partnership was to join efforts focused on the conservation and development of mountain territories, being UNESCO heritage. In 2011–2012, the program for the provision of microloans to the local population for agriculture and green tourism development, as well as creation of relevant infrastructure and conditions was implemented in cooperation area of Altai Biosphere Reserve as part of a dedicated project by Altai-Sayan Mountain Partnership;

Coordination Board of Altai Biosphere Reserve, i.e. the body for its management on the regional level (the level of the Republic of Altai) has been formed to include Minister for Natural

Resources, Environment and Property Relations of the Republic of Altai, heads of municipal units (districts) and heads of settlements located in cooperation area of Altai Biosphere Reserve;

With the active participation of Altai Biosphere Reserve, we have developed a Concept of Teletskoye Natural Area Sustainable Development Strategy, attendance, accommodation and tour operation policies for protected settlements and the ones in close proximity to Lake Teletskoye — UNESCO World Heritage property;

Programs for Yailyu and Bele development as eco-settlements have been prepared;

Separate program of Altai Biosphere Reserve was dedicated to Lake Teletskoye conservation, as well as social and economic development of settlements (Artybash, Iogach, Balykcha) located in close proximity to Lake Teletskoye;

Altai Biosphere Reserve participated in the preparation of the Strategy for Management and Development of the UNESCO World Heritage property *The Golden Mountains of Altai* (2009), has joined the Coordination Board for property management;

Organizations of different levels and subjects (ministries, authorities, committees, nonprofit institutions) have been extensively involved in activities of the Biosphere Reserve by signing agreements and contracts for mutually advantageous collaboration (protection of the territory, research activities, environmental education and eco-tourism. The Reserve has entered into partnership agreements with Altai indigenous small ethnic communities (Kumandins, Telengits, Tubalars, Chelkans), youth non-governmental organization of native minorities living in the Republic of Altai (in the field of sustainable support for indigenous population and performance of joint ethnic and environmental educational activities).

Partnership agreements have been signed with the organizations as follows: Rebirth of Kumandin People and Telengit People Development;

Eco-friendly approaches to rendering of critical services and alternative methods for producing energy (solar arrays have been installed and are used on all cordons, as well as several wind-driven power plants and hydraulic units) have been implemented on the territory of the Biosphere Reserve and in close proximity to it. Altai Biosphere Reserve holds meetings and workshops focused on using alternative sources of energy for the local population;

Some projects and programs of Altai Biosphere Reserve are devoted to eco-tourism development on its territory. In 2008, the Reserve entered into Partnership Agreement with the Ministry for Tourism, Business and Investment of the Republic of Altai.

3. Significant changes within the World Heritage property are not expected.