

**AFRICA**

**SANGHA TRINATIONAL**

**CONGO, CAMEROON, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**



## WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

### SANGHA TRINATIONAL (CONGO, CAMEROON, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC) ID No. 1380 Rev

**IUCN RECOMMENDATION TO WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE:** To inscribe the property under natural criteria

**Key paragraphs of Operational Guidelines:**

77 Property meets natural criteria

78 Property meets conditions of integrity and protection and management requirements

**Background note:** As detailed in the IUCN evaluation report for 35COM, IUCN recommended a deferral of the original nomination. While maintaining the full set of technical IUCN recommendations, the Committee decided to refer the nomination (35COM 8B.4). As a follow-up and as requested in Decision 35COM 8B.4, and upon the request of the States Parties, IUCN provided advice to the States Parties on the interpretation of the IUCN recommendations. This advice was provided by different means including through several workshops in Central Africa. A meeting in Paris brought together representatives of IUCN (both field evaluators and a representative of the IUCN World Heritage Programme), the World Heritage Centre and an international consultant hired to contribute to the revision of the nomination dossier. Two participants of the meeting in Paris personally conveyed the conclusions of the group to the participants of a subsequent workshop in Cameroon. A member of IUCN regional staff, based in Yaoundé, contributed to further convey IUCN's advice as considered by the Committee, in particular by representing IUCN at two workshops in the region.

#### 1. DOCUMENTATION

**a) Date nomination received by IUCN:** Original nomination received on 15 March 2010. Revised version after 35COM referral decision received on 28 February 2012.

**b) Additional information officially requested from and provided by the State Party:** Supplementary information on the original nomination was requested from the State Party on 04 January 2011. The Republic of Congo submitted the requested information on 24 February 2011 on behalf of the three States Parties. The submitted information was considered in IUCN's 2011 evaluation report and this 2012 Evaluation Report.

**c) Additional Literature Consulted:** Cassidy R., Watkins B., Cassidy T. (2010) **First record of Re-necked Picathartes oreas for Central African Republic.** Bull ABC 17 (2) : 216-217; Endamana D., Klintuni Boedihartono A., Bokoto B., Defo L., Eyebe A., Ndikumagenge C., Nzoo Z., Ruiz-Perez M., Sayer J.A. (2010) **A framework for assessing conservation and development in a Congo Basin forest landscape.** Trop. Conserv. Sci. 3 (3): 262-281; Kirtley, A., Gontero, D. (2011). **Forests, Development, and Dignity for the BaAka A Needs Assessment of the BaAka Pygmy Population living in the Dzanga Sangha Complex of the Central African Republic.** Submitted to Sacharuna Foundation; Sandker M., Campbell B.M., Nzoo Z., Sunderland T., Amougou V., Defo L., Sayer J.A. (2009). **Exploring the effectiveness of integrated conservation and development interventions in a Central African forest landscape.** Biodivers. Conserv.;

UNESCO (2010) **Le patrimoine mondial dans le bassin du Congo.** Unesco Paris : 63 p.; White, L., J.P. Vande weghe (2009). **Patrimoine mondial naturel d'Afrique centrale: Bien existants – Bien potentiels.** Rapport de l'atelier de Brazzaville du 12-14 mars 2008 UNESCO Centre du Patrimoine Mondial Paris France; Yanggen, D., Angu, K., Tchamou, N. (2010) **Conservation à l'échelle du Paysage dans le Bassin du Congo : Leçons tirées du Programme régional pour l'environnement en Afrique centrale (CARPE).** IUCN / USAID

**d) Consultations:** Five external reviewers were consulted, together with both IUCN representatives from the 2010 field visit.

**e) Field Visit:** Gérard Collin and Charles Doumenge evaluated the original nomination in November 2010.

**f) Date of IUCN approval of this report:** April 2012

#### 2. SUMMARY OF NATURAL VALUES

Tri-national de la Sangha (Sangha Trinational), or TNS is a transboundary conservation complex in the North-western Congo Basin where Cameroon, the Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic meet. TNS encompasses three contiguous national parks totalling 754,286 hectares. These are Lobéké National Park in Cameroon, Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park in Congo and Dzanga-Ndoki National Park in the Central African Republic. The latter is comprised of two distinct units. The parks are embedded in a much larger forest

landscape, sometimes referred to as the TNS Landscape. Compared to the original nomination referred at 35COM the buffer zone has been significantly enlarged to 1,787,950 ha compared to less than 400,000 ha before.

Natural values and features include the ongoing ecological and evolutionary processes in a mostly intact forest landscape at a very large scale. Numerous and diverse habitats such as tropical forests comprised of deciduous and evergreen species, a great diversity of wetland types, including swamp forests and periodically flooded forests and many types of forest clearings of major conservation importance continue to be connected at a landscape level and harbor viable populations of complete faunal and floral assemblages, including top predators and rare and endangered species. The size, biogeographic location at the junction between the Congo Basin and the Lower Guinea floristic domains and very limited man-made disturbance are factors that have contributed to the development and maintenance of the remarkable diversity of life. Unlike many other parts of the Congo Basin, TNS comprises large tracts of ecologically and functionally intact tropical lowland forests which have never been commercially exploited or deprived of ecologically important mammals and birds by excessive hunting and poaching. An estimated 30% of TNS has been selectively logged for commercial purposes and near settlements during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but has since mostly been left to naturally regenerate into ecologically valuable secondary forests. Historic human use goes back a long time with the impacts of the traditional semi-nomadic inhabitants living from hunting, gathering and fishing having remained very limited. The human population density remains extremely low.

The Sangha River constitutes the major water course of the watershed and transverses TNS from North to South. A largely undisturbed major tributary to the Congo River, the Sangha continues to host populations of the Nile Crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*), as well as the Goliath Tigerfish (*Hydrocynus goliath*), a large predator.

The nominated property and the broader landscape contain a network of extremely diverse natural forest clearings on hydromorphic soil. The clearings can be broadly differentiated into clearings along water courses, locally referred to by the indigenous term of "baïs", whereas others are depressions locally known as "yangas". They have an important role for wildlife as mineral licks which many species depend on. 138 clearings are known but many remain to be documented and studied both in the nominated property and the buffer zone. The variability in size, soil and hydrological conditions and seed dispersion mechanisms has given rise to diverse habitat and species assemblages. Not only does the flora differ, the clearings also attract very different animal species. Within the large forest matrix the clearings have an important ecological role for many taxonomic groups including mammals and birds.

Species regularly visiting the forest clearings include Forest Elephants, Gorillas, Chimpanzees, several antelope species such as the Sitatunga and the emblematic Bongo, as well as different species of wild pig.

Beyond their ecological importance, the clearings facilitate unusual opportunities for scientific and touristic observations otherwise unavailable in most tropical lowland rainforests. In addition to the clearings there are numerous lakes, likewise of high wildlife importance. It is important to note that there are large numbers of forest clearings and lakes located outside of the nominated area, in particular in Congolese forest concessions, south of the nominated property. Their inclusion in the buffer zone and consideration for their protection in the logging concessions are positive from a conservation perspective.

The biodiversity of TNS represents the full spectrum of humid tropical forest ecosystems in Africa but the flora is enriched by additional herbaceous species occurring exclusively in the forest clearings. Endemic species and subspecies have been identified in the Sangha River corridor and in particular in the nominated property, such as the Sangha Forest Robin (*Stiphornis sanghensis*). Future research is likely to discover new species, in particular arthropods. TNS protects a large number of heavily exploited tree species including vulnerable species such as numerous Meliaceae, and Critically Endangered species such as *Austranella congolensis*.

The populations of forest elephants (*Loxodonta africana cyclotis*) are considerable and healthy as indicated by males bearing large tusks and a balanced sex ratio. Two hominoids, the Western Lowland Gorilla (Critically Endangered) and the Chimpanzee (Endangered), have important populations in and around the nominated property. Both are believed to reach among their highest population densities anywhere. It is also believed that some populations of these species may have never had encounters with human beings.

Remarkably, certain species are restricted to one side of the Sangha River, such as some small arboreal primates. Others, including the Western Lowland Gorilla show different behaviour on different sides of the river, re-affirming the need to manage and conserve at the landscape level to protect the diversity of TNS.

### 3. COMPARISONS WITH OTHER AREAS

The property has been nominated under natural criteria (ix) and (x). The nomination includes a comprehensive analysis putting TNS in perspective within the Guinean-Congolese forests and the Central African forest region but also major tropical forests worldwide in terms of size, number and density of selected species, species diversity (plants, mammals and birds), habitat diversity, and wildlife aggregations. The comparative analysis

uses a wide range of data from UNESCO, UNEP-WCMC and IUCN.

Results from the comparative analysis show that TNS does have major importance for great ape conservation in Western Equatorial Africa for its scale, remoteness and for so far being free of the devastating Ebola virus. TNS supports over 4,000, maybe over 8,000 Western Lowland Gorilla and Chimpanzee, plus at least 4,000 forest elephants. TNS is also among the few remaining large-scale priority areas for other taxa, including forest elephants, even though two other priority areas in the region are already on the World Heritage List, the Dja Conservation Complex and the Lopé National Park (LNP). However, TNS is larger than the LNP and has by far greater ape populations, and TNS is larger and more important for other taxa than the Dja Conservation Complex.

In terms of size, TNS is not as large as Salonga National Park or Okapi Wildlife Reserve in the Democratic Republic of Congo; it is as large as Virunga National Park; and exceeds Kahuzi-Biega National Park (Democratic Republic of Congo), the Ecosystem and Relict Cultural Landscape of Lopé-Okanda (Gabon) and Dja Faunal Reserve (Cameroon). At the same time the new addition of major buffer zones surrounding the three national parks comprising the nominated property and ongoing efforts to improve logging practices in concessions will substantially contribute to improved conservation and management at a large scale well beyond the nominated property which is a unique feature of TNS when compared to other World Heritage properties.

While it could be argued that other existing World Heritage properties support a higher diversity, the size, existence of large pristine areas, relative remoteness and intactness of the property, the high diversity of habitats including the various types of forest clearings, as well as the still mostly forested surrounding landscape support the case for Outstanding Universal Value of TNS as the combination and scale of these numerous values and phenomena is exceptional.

Clearly, some of the values and intactness of TNS are a function of the much larger forest landscape. Therefore, the future of TNS will also depend on the fate of the surroundings. More concretely, it will depend on the balance between conservation and resource use, including addressing local livelihood needs and effectively controlling commercial logging.

#### **4. INTEGRITY, PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT**

##### **4.1. Protection**

The nominated property is comprised of three state-owned national parks: Lobéké National Park in Cameroon, Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park in Congo and Dzanga-Ndoki National Park in the Central African Republic. With the exception of a small fishing

community there appear to be no permanent inhabitants within the nominated property.

Lobéké National Park, created in 2001, extends across 217,854 ha. While hunting, fishing, gathering of forest products, mining and logging are not permitted, a zone for fishing and extractive use of non-timber forest products by local communities has been designated in the Western part of the park.

Dzanga-Ndoki National Park was created as early as 1990 as the first formal conservation area in the subregion. The park consists of two distinct parts. The Northern part, Dzanga, covers 49,500 ha while the Southern part, Ndoki, extends across 72,500 ha, thus totalling 122,000 ha. The two parts are connected by Dzanga-Sangha Special Forest Reserve established in the same year with a surface of 335,900 ha. A two-kilometre wide "pre-park" zone buffers form parts of the National Park. Both parts are also connected through Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park which is located contiguous to both in the neighbouring Republic of Congo.

Dzanga-Ndoki National Park is also legally based on the Forest Law of 1990 defining the national forest code. Hunting, gathering and fishing, as well as mineral and timber exploitation, are not permitted. In contrast, the Special Forest Reserve proposed as a formal buffer zone, is a multiple use area with the stated objectives to conserve the fauna and regional ecosystems but to also meet the needs of local communities. The reserve is subdivided into five zones: commercial hunting zone (concessions); community hunting zone; timber extraction zone; rural development zone; bush meat production zone.

The 386,592 ha Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park was established in 1993 and completed in 2002 when 19,863 ha, part of a former logging concession (Unité Forestière d'Aménagement or UFA), and today known as the Goulougo Triangle were added. The National Park is based on the Forest Law of 2000 and the Law on Fauna of 2008 which deals with protected areas.

In 2000, the first ministerial meeting of the Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC) took place. The ministers of Cameroon, the Central African Republic and the Republic of Congo signed a cooperation agreement to establish TNS. This agreement documented the vision to coordinate conservation, management and research efforts in the three national parks, but also refers to sustainable development, tourism and anti-poaching. The TNS Foundation was created in 2007 to contribute to the financing of the park but also sustainable use in the broader landscape.

The establishment of the transboundary complex and of the TNS Foundation provides a strong framework and is showing positive results. More recently and in response to the Committee decision 35COM 8B.4 the three State Parties involved in this nomination declared more than

1.7 million ha of adjacent land as a formal buffer zone. The land is mostly under timber concessions most of which address or are starting to address key social and environmental issues under certification schemes.

Overall and despite many challenges, TNS is a highly encouraging example of transboundary cooperation and conservation in the region. The protection status of the nominated property is appropriate. Formally, the concerns about the broader landscape and its relationships with the nominated property expressed in the previous IUCN evaluation have been dealt with through the declaration of a large buffer zone.

IUCN considers the protection status of the nominated property meets the requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines.

#### 4.2 Boundaries

The boundaries of the nominated property are defined by the legal extent of the three existing national parks: Lobéké National Park in Cameroon, Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park in Congo and Dzanga-Ndoki National Park in the Central African Republic. In the case of Lobéké National Park they follow water courses or dirt roads. As for Nouabalé-Ndoki and Dzanga-Ndoki National Parks, in some case administrative or geographical limits are used.

In the original nomination a formal buffer zone for the nominated property had only been designated in the Central African Republic in the form of the Dzanga-Sangha Special Forest Reserve. In the other two countries, the nominated property is adjacent to concessions which are committed to regulated logging, and many adhere to the standards established by Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which includes social standards. While these concessions are of vital importance for the long term integrity and conservation value of the nominated property, they were not formally proposed as buffer zones to the property. This has since been revised and the entire nominated property is now surrounded by a large buffer zone in all three countries. In IUCN's view this is a most welcome acknowledgement of the intricate linkages between the nominated property and its surroundings. It is hoped that these changes in the approach will provide an umbrella for land use planning and for addressing the livelihood needs of local and indigenous communities in the broader TNS landscape. IUCN also notes that important values that are noted in the nomination, such as the rich natural forest clearings and associated wetlands, are partially located in these adjoining concessions and contribute to the overall conservation value of the landscape.

Consistent with earlier conclusions IUCN considers the integration of concessions bordering the various national parks as formal buffer zones a considerable conceptual improvement. It is likely to increase the integrity of a

possible future World Heritage property provided that timber extraction in the forest concessions do not compromise the natural and cultural values of the nominated property nor the livelihoods of local communities and indigenous peoples.

IUCN considers that the boundaries of the nominated property meet the requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines.

#### 4.3 Management

The three national parks all have management and administrative staff provided or supported by both governments and international cooperation agencies. Lobéké National has a permanent staff of roughly forty, including several technical and scientific staff provided through an agreement with the Djengi project (WWF and the German development agency, GIZ). Dzanga-Ndoki National Park has 148 staff of which only ten are government funded, another ten are funded from tourism revenues with the rest supported by WWF. In Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park there are 18 staff, including 12 "ecoguards". The Wildlife Conservation Society Congo Program (WCS) supports around 50 permanent technical and scientific staff. Consequently, around 300 are involved in the management of TNS at various levels.

The national level support budgets for the parks are modest, contributing only a small percentage to the overall budget, leaving the bulk of funding to international cooperation and concessionaries near TNS. The latter finance the salaries of the "ecoguards" whose tasks include anti-poaching activities. It is hoped that this significant dependence on external support will eventually be reduced through increasing capacities, higher governmental budget allocations and new forms of conservation financing.

TNS Foundation, established in 2007, is a private entity, established under British law with its executive headquarters in Central Africa. It is managed by a Board of Directors, consisting of 11 members who are representatives of the governments of Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Central Africa Republic, as well as WWF, the Wildlife Conservation Society, Rainforest Foundation, KfW banking group, l'Agence Française de développement (AFD) (observer), the park managers and civil society. Set up as a conservation trust, it has the objective to secure long term funding through contributions from various donors. Currently, there is a capital of about €20M mostly from KfW, AFD and German foundation "Regenwald Stiftung" founded by a private brewery. The stated objective is €35M. On the basis of an estimated 4% of annual returns, the fund is reported to cover the identified funding needs. There are four areas representing the three countries involved and a fourth dedicated specifically to transboundary efforts. The Fund is the most important source of funding for the property besides revenues from tourism.

The management and conservation efforts, as well as research are well coordinated across the national boundaries. There is a Trinational Monitoring and Action Committee (Comité Tri-national de Suivi et d'Action); bringing together the three countries at the ministerial level. A Trinational Monitoring Committee unites the three countries at the level of regional administrations.

Regular trilateral meetings take place at the management and implementation level (Comité Tri-national de Planification et d'Exécution) and between park managers. A scientific Committee (CST) has been declared but it is still to be fully operational.

These efforts are laudable and constitute a promising operational set-up for communication and cooperation in a complex transboundary setting across three countries. The management of the entire property is expected to benefit from operationalizing the intended scientific committee.

Supported by international agencies and NGOs, all three parks consider socio-economic community concerns. The protected areas administrations are involved in setting up schools and drilling wells. Literacy programmes, including for indigenous peoples, have been established, and support has been provided to local farmers.

The traditional livelihoods of the indigenous peoples, such as the BaAkas, are to an extent considered in park's management but it is clear that the establishment of the parks has excluded local communities from previously used land and resources. There are policies for local resource users in the protected areas. In Lobéké National Park (Cameroon) there are use zones within the park. In the Central African Republic, the buffer zone permits local resource use, including indigenous hunting and gathering. In the case of Congo, community hunting zones have been designated within logging concessions. The significantly enlarged buffer zone presents an opportunity to consider the livelihood needs of local and indigenous communities under the World Heritage umbrella more thoroughly. In particular the World Heritage momentum associated to this nomination should be used to follow up on a range of different commitments of the States Parties regarding the recognition of the rights of local and indigenous peoples. IUCN considers this matter should be noted as an explicit and important expectation for the protection and management of the area if inscribed on the World Heritage List, and as a matter that should be considered further by the World Heritage Committee.

Park management would need to have a stronger mandate to become more actively involved in guiding actions in the buffer zones. These areas are doubtlessly decisive for maintaining and enhancing the integrity of the nominated property. There is also a need to harmonize legal approaches and regulations across all the State Parties involved in this nomination as to allow the traditional use of resources by indigenous peoples.

The need for using local knowledge in wildlife management and resource use should be also considered in the zonation and management planning of the buffer zone.

The remote location and limited infrastructure sets certain limits to tourism development. Several lodges and infrastructure to receive visitors, such as Mambélé in Lobéké National Park, the Sangha Lodge, in Dzanga-Ndoki National Park, as well as Bomassa et Mbéli in Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park. Some of the better known forest clearings offer visits and guides (Sangha Baï, Central African Republic; Mbéli Baï, Republic of Congo; Bolo Baï, Cameroon).

The development of touristic infrastructure is adequate for such a remote area and seems appropriate to deal with the currently very low numbers of visitors. In the medium term TNS would benefit from a comprehensive tourism planning.

Overall, the approach to natural resource management appears to be progressing in a positive direction. Through the declaration of a major buffer zone there is now a clear recognition in the nomination that park management must also address issues on local communities and indigenous people's livelihoods in an integrated manner.

IUCN considers the management of the nominated property meets the requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines.

#### 4.4 Threats

##### **Logging and secondary effects of logging**

Illegal logging does not appear to constitute a major concern within the nominated property and the prospects for the parks in this regard appear positive. Given the local practices, remoteness, transport costs and rareness of commercially viable species resulting in highly selective extraction, logging as such is not expected to lead to deforestation or major forest degradation. In terms of the broader landscape, logging does play a major role though as the nominated property is surrounded by concessions almost in its entirety on the basis of long-term contracts. Only the concessions within the Dzanga-Sangha Special Forest Reserve have not been allocated so far. The type of highly selective logging and increasingly high forest management standards in line with or based on FSC are a positive development. Having considerable parts of the concession formally nominated as buffer zones it is expected that there will a close coordination between logging concessions and park management.

The concern, however, are secondary effects of logging through the establishment of roads in otherwise inaccessible areas. The effects of this "door opener" are well documented and in Central Africa are often related to informal settlements, small-scale mining and poaching for bush meat and ivory. Countering these effects

requires political willingness and full cooperation on the part of concessionaires. A stronger commitment to control of poaching should be encouraged. The declaration of the buffer zone surrounding the nominated property should be used by conservationists to have a stronger involvement in the future of the forest concessions.

### **Hunting, poaching and fishing**

Hunting by local people is a traditional and legitimate resource use in the TNS landscape. Community hunting reserves have been established outside of the nominated property. Feedback from independent reviewers suggests room for improvement in terms of designing and managing community hunting reserves.

Excessive commercial poaching for bush meat and/or trophies may well constitute the single most important threat to TNS. Poaching for ivory remains a strong concern despite successful anti-poaching efforts, including across international boundaries. The balance of decisive action against poaching and permitted legal hunting is here to stay as a major challenge and implications for community livelihoods, relations, law enforcement efforts and investments, transboundary coordination, integrity and the local perception and acceptance of formal nature conservation.

Commercial “safari” hunting is legally possible in many parts of the proposed buffer zone and is already taking place in some areas. It is important that this activity benefit local communities through generation of revenues and employment. There may be opportunities to further tap into the potential of sports hunting as a conservation financing instrument. Hunting must be accompanied by monitoring to prevent impacts on ecologically important species, such as predators or large mammals.

Fishing is occurring at a subsistence level and does not appear to constitute a major conservation concern for the time being.

### **Agriculture**

Small-scale agriculture, including livestock keeping, is widespread around the villages in the area but practically non-existent within the nominated property. Wildlife damage to crops, such as from elephants and gorillas, are a sensitive human-wildlife conflict which will continue to impact on the relationship between park staff and local communities and indeed the very perception of conservation. Mitigation and compensation measures should be put in place as a management response to address this issue.

### **Mining**

No major mining is known to occur within the nominated property. Small scale diamond exploitation is illegally developing in the Northern part Dzanga-Sangha Special Forest Reserve proposed as a buffer zone and may occasionally occur in the parks. The closest mining is only around five kilometres away from the Northern part

of Dzanga-Ndoki National Park. Monitoring and, if needed, decisive action is needed in order to phase out the illegal mining in Dzanga-Sangha Special Forest Reserve and to prevent its expansion into Dzanga-Ndoki National Park. In the much larger buffer zone proposed in the revised nomination there are a number of areas where mining is reported. Future management should address these questions in coordination with other sectors.

### **Epidemics**

The Ebola virus has not been documented in the nominated area but poses a potential threat, particularly for the populations of Western Lowland Gorilla. Biosecurity considerations and safety precautions in tourism management are therefore of the utmost importance in the management of the property.

In summary, IUCN considers the nominated property meets the conditions of integrity as outlined in the Operational Guidelines.

## **5. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

### **5.1 Consideration of local people, including local cultural values**

IUCN had noted in its earlier evaluation that there is a rich cultural heritage associated with the nominated property. As pointed out before this has not been strongly considered within the nomination even though the revised nomination considers local and indigenous communities in more detail than the previous documentation. IUCN has also followed, but without the possibility of an on-site mission, the further consultation arrangements regarding the nomination, and also received representations from an observer of the consultation in one of the nominating States that these were not adequate and took place very late and only at the moment of submission of the referral information. IUCN considers that the World Heritage Committee may wish to consider this matter further with the nominating States Parties in considering the potential inscription of the property on the World Heritage List. Consistent with the view that inscription on the World Heritage List would provide momentum to further and better consider these issues, and support the rights of the traditional communities within the existing protected areas that make up the nomination, IUCN recommends that they are commented on specifically in the Committee decision. In IUCN’s view, the inclusion of a large buffer zone in the revised nomination provides a good basis for natural resource management of the broader landscape considering ways and means to address the livelihoods of local communities and indigenous peoples as well as to enhance their involvement in planning and decision-making.

## 6. APPLICATION OF CRITERIA

Sangha Trinational has been nominated under criteria (ix), and (x). The States Parties have decided to not make a case for criterion (vii) which was considered in the first nomination.

### Criterion (ix): Ecological processes

The property is characterised by its large size, further supported by the massive buffer zone, minimal disturbance over long periods and intactness thereby enabling the continuation of ecological and evolutionary processes at a huge scale. This includes the continuous presence of healthy natural populations of wildlife, including top predators and large mammals which are often affected by hunting and poaching elsewhere. There is a fully connected mosaic of very diverse habitats, including numerous types of ecologically remarkable forest clearings attracting major wildlife aggregations and countless plant species otherwise not found in the forest landscape. Unlike many other forest protected areas, the nominated property is not a remaining fragment but continues to be part of a much larger intact and ecologically functional landscape. This is increasingly rare and significant at a global scale.

IUCN considers that the nominated property meets this criterion.

### Criterion (x): Biodiversity and threatened species

The nominated property represents a wide spectrum of the species-rich humid tropical forest ecosystems in Central Africa's Congo Basin. The flora is enriched by additional herbaceous species occurring exclusively in the many types of forest clearings. TNS protects a large number of tree species which are heavily commercially exploited elsewhere, such as the critically endangered Mukulungu (and various species commercially traded as "ebony", and so at risk of extinction. The property provides protection for a range of endangered species. In addition to viable populations of forest elephants, significant populations of the critically endangered Western Lowland Gorilla and the endangered Chimpanzee occur both in and around the property, together with several antelope species, such as the Sitatunga and the emblematic Bongo.

IUCN considers that the nominated property meets this criterion.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

IUCN recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopt the following draft decision:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents WHC-12/36.COM/8B and WHC-12/36.COM/INF.8B2;

2. Inscribes the **Sangha Trinational (Republic of Congo, Cameroon and Central African Republic)** on the World Heritage List under natural criteria (ix) and (x);

3. Adopts the following Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

### **Brief synthesis**

*Trinational de la Sangha (TNS - Sangha Trinational) is a transboundary conservation complex in the North-western Congo Basin where Cameroon, the Central African Republic and the Republic of Congo meet. TNS encompasses three contiguous national parks totalling a legally defined area of 746,309 hectares. These are Lobéké National Park in Cameroon, Dzanga-Ndoki National Park in the Central African Republic and Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park in the Republic of Congo. Dzanga-Ndoki National Park is comprised of two distinct units. The parks are embedded in a much larger forest landscape, sometimes referred to as the TNS Landscape. A buffer zone of 1,787,950 hectares has been established in recognition of the importance of the broader landscape and its inhabitants for the future of the property. The buffer zone includes Dzanga-Sanga Forest Reserve in the Central African Republic, which connects the two units of Dzanga-Ndoki National Park.*

*Natural values and features include the ongoing ecological and evolutionary processes in a mostly intact forest landscape at a very large scale. Numerous and diverse habitats such as tropical forests comprised of deciduous and evergreen species, a great diversity of wetland types, including swamp forests and periodically flooded forests and many types of forest clearings of major conservation importance continue to be connected at a landscape level. This mosaic of ecosystems harbours viable populations of complete faunal and floral assemblages, including top predators and rare and endangered species, such as Forest Elephants, Gorillas, Chimpanzees, and several antelope species, such as the Sitatunga and the emblematic Bongo.*

### **Criteria**

#### **Criterion (ix)**

*The property is characterised by its large size, further supported by the very large buffer zone, minimal disturbance over long periods and intactness thereby enabling the continuation of ecological and evolutionary processes at a huge scale. This includes the continuous presence of viable populations and natural densities of wildlife, including top predators and large mammals which are often affected by hunting and poaching elsewhere. There is a fully connected mosaic of very diverse habitats, including numerous types of ecologically remarkable forest clearings attracting major wildlife aggregations and countless plant species otherwise not found in the forest landscape. Unlike many other forest protected areas, the property is not a remaining fragment but continues to be part of a much larger intact and landscape with good conservation prospects. This is increasingly rare and significant at a global scale.*

### **Criterion (x)**

The property represents a wide spectrum of the species-rich humid tropical forests in Central Africa's Congo Basin, and provides protection for a range of endangered species. The flora is enriched by species occurring exclusively in the many types of forest clearings. TNS protects a large number of tree species which are heavily commercially exploited elsewhere, such as the critically endangered Mukulungu. In addition to viable populations of forest elephants, significant populations of the critically endangered Western Lowland Gorilla and the endangered Chimpanzee occur both in and around the property, together with several endangered antelope species, such as the Sitatunga and the emblematic Bongo.

### **Integrity**

The boundaries of the property coincide with the boundaries of three existing national parks thereby forming a large and contiguous protected area in the heart of the broader TNS Landscape. The entire property is surrounded by a large buffer zone in all three countries which responds to the intricate ecological linkages between the property and its surroundings. This approach provides an umbrella for land-use planning and for integrating the legitimate livelihood needs of local and indigenous communities with nature conservation within the broader TNS landscape. Logging and hunting is banned in the national parks. In addition, the remoteness of TNS adds a natural layer of protection from resource exploitation. It will be essential to ensure that the future activities in the buffer zones, including forest and wildlife management, tourism, agriculture and infrastructure are fully compatible with the conservation objectives for TNS so the surrounding landscape will satisfy the needs of local and indigenous communities while indeed serving as a "buffer" for the property.

### **Protection and management requirements**

There is strong and committed joint management of the property bringing together all three States Parties, an indispensable permanent requirement. The three national parks that make up the property all have management and administrative staff provided by governments and if needed complemented through international support from non-governmental organizations, as well as multi-lateral and bi-lateral agencies. Management, law enforcement, research, monitoring and tourism all require coordination across the national boundaries. There is a Trinational Monitoring and Action Committee (Comité Trinational de Suivi et d'Action), bringing together the three countries at the ministerial level. A Trinational Monitoring Committee unites the three countries at the level of regional administrations. These mechanisms are effective in providing a joint protection and management approach to the property, and will need to be maintained and built upon.

The rights and traditional livelihoods of local and indigenous peoples, such as the BaAkas, are a

fundamental and increasingly recognised element in the management of the property. Whereas in Lobéké National Park (Cameroon) there are use zones within the park, in the Central African Republic and the Republic of Congo, local resource use, including indigenous hunting and gathering, is not permitted in the protected areas thereby affecting local livelihoods and creating the potential for conflict. This illustrates the crucial importance of finding an overall balance between nature conservation and local resource use in the broader landscape. The significantly enlarged buffer zone presents an opportunity to better understand and integrate the livelihood needs but also the knowledge of local and indigenous communities under the umbrella of a living TNS landscape. The inscription on the World Heritage List presents a concrete opportunity for the States Parties to translate a range of different commitments of the States Parties regarding the rights of local and indigenous people into action on the ground.

Maintaining the ecological values of the property will not only depend on law enforcement but eventually both on the standards of commercial resource extraction in the buffer zone and the acceptance and support of parks by the local and indigenous communities in the surrounding landscape.

4. Strongly commends the three State Parties for their constructive joint response to decision 35COM 8B.4 of the World Heritage Committee, in particular as regards the consideration of a much larger landscape as a formal buffer zone for the property and the stronger acknowledgment of and reference to the need to effectively engage local and indigenous communities, in the management of the property;

5. Requests the State Parties to provide an enhanced map of the defined boundaries of the buffer zones, at an appropriate large scale, to the World Heritage Centre before 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012;

6. Considers that inscription of the property on the World Heritage List provides an opportunity to further enhance a number of protection and management arrangements for the property and its buffer zone, and therefore requests the State Parties to:

a) use the declaration of a large buffer zone surrounding the entire property as an opportunity to further develop an integrated landscape approach in line with commitments stated in the nomination;

b) increase further the involvement and representation of local and indigenous communities in the future conservation and management of the TNS landscape in recognition of the rich cultural heritage of the region, the legitimacy of their rights to maintain traditional resource use and their rich local knowledge, including through providing effective and enhanced mechanisms for consultation and collaboration;

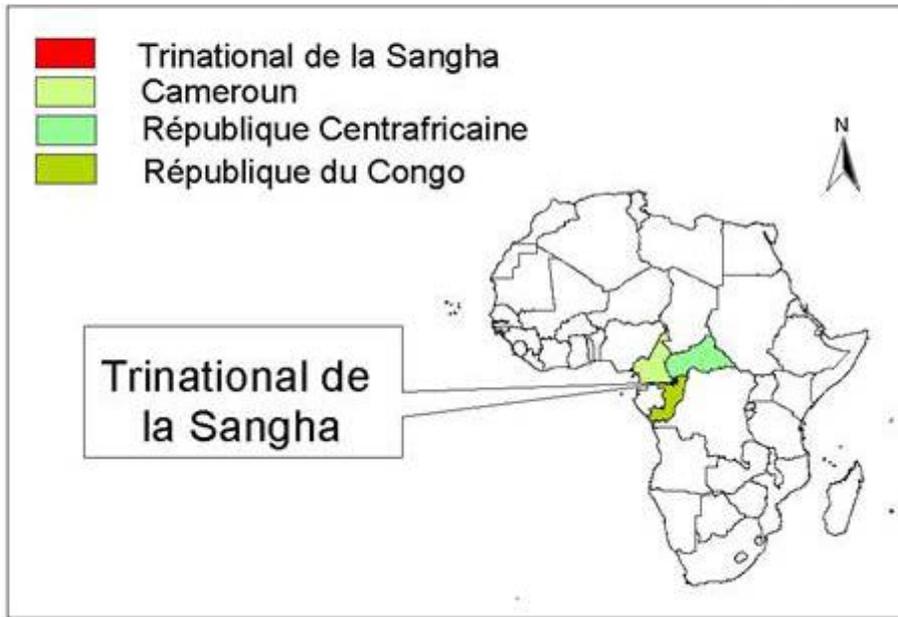
- c) further ensure and monitor socially and environmentally high performance standards of the logging and hunting concessions;
- d) further harmonize objectives and guidelines for the various conservation initiatives and management planning, including tourism planning among the three State Parties;
- e) further improve coordination between ministries and sectors to ensure adequate and consistent planning of land and resource use, and law enforcement in the buffer zone;
- f) ensure adequate long-term funding support for the property, including through full support to the

Trust Fund and to the retention of tourism revenues for conservation and community development purposes.

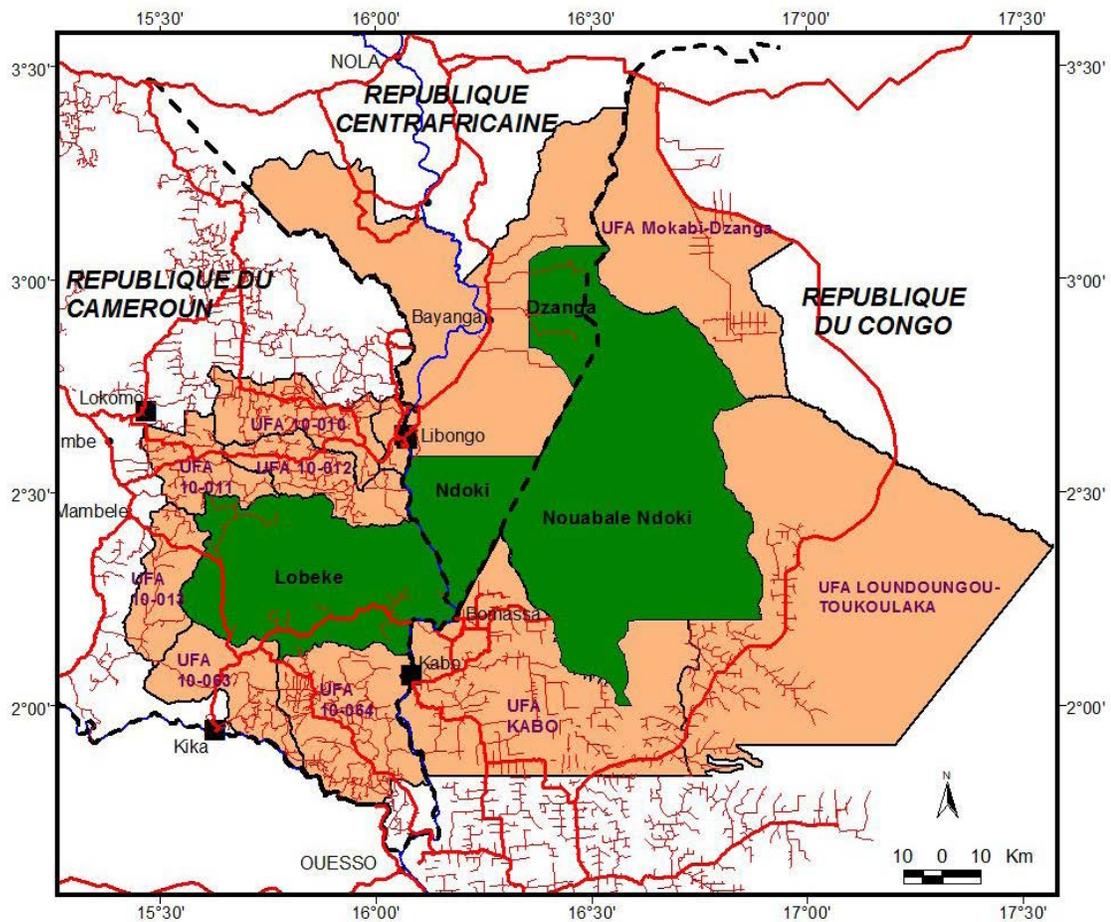
7. Expresses its strong appreciation to the States Parties for their longstanding transboundary approach to conservation and management efforts of a shared landscape and the major and ongoing international support that has been provided to support this work;

8. Provide a report to the World Heritage Centre by **1<sup>st</sup> February 2014** on the progress in implementing the above recommendations, for possible consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 38<sup>th</sup> Session in 2014.

**Map 1:** Nominated property location in Africa



**Map 2:** Nominated property and buffer zone



**Légende**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  Parc National  |  Rivière navigable           |
|  Zone tampon  |  Frontière nationale         |
|  Ville forestière<br>(Site de transformation du bois) |  Route principale            |
|  Principale ville/village                             |  Route forestière secondaire |