

ARAB STATES

SANGANEB MARINE NATIONAL PARK AND DUNGONAB BAY - MUKKAWAR ISLAND MARINE NATIONAL PARK

SUDAN



Corals in Dungonab Bay - © IUCN Hany El Shaer

WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

SANGANEB MARINE NATIONAL PARK AND DUGONAB BAY/MUKKAWAR ISLAND MARINE NATIONAL PARK (SUDAN) – ID No. 262 Ter

IUCN RECOMMENDATION TO WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE: To refer the property under natural criteria.

Key paragraphs of Operational Guidelines:

Paragraph 77: Property has potential to meet natural criteria.

Paragraph 78: Nominated property does not meet integrity or protection and management requirements.

Background note: The nomination of Sanganeb Marine National Park and Dugonab Bay – Mukkawar Island Marine National Park was referred by the 39th Session of the World Heritage Committee (Decision 39 COM 8B.3), following a recommendation to defer the property by IUCN. The Committee’s decision requested the State Party to:

- a) Review, with the support of IUCN, the boundaries of the nominated property to better define the nominated area and buffer zones to ensure that all the natural attributes which contribute to the globally significant values are appropriately included and that integrity is enhanced. Specifically, consideration should be given to including the designated marine buffer zone area of Sanganeb Marine National Park and other reefs (included in the buffer zone) within the nominated area; to expanding the nominated area to include more of the terrestrial component of Dugonab Marine National Park designated buffer zone; and to incorporating other attributes contributing to Outstanding Universal Value which lie within the linking buffer zone;
- b) Update the management plans for Sanganeb Marine National Park and Dugonab Marine National Park and develop an integrated management framework for the whole property that guides coordinated inter-agency policy and management and promotes the effective involvement of different stakeholders including local communities;
- c) Demonstrate increased financial resources and staffing capacity to ensure an adequate level of effective management of the nominated property and provide assurances to the World Heritage Committee on commitments to maintain ongoing sustainable financing.

The attention of the Committee is drawn to the earlier IUCN evaluation for 39COM 8B (including its background note on the earlier consideration of this nomination by the Committee) to avoid repeating information.

1. DOCUMENTATION

a) Date nomination received by IUCN: Original nomination received on 18 March 2014. Revised version after 39COM referral decision received on 2 February 2016.

b) Additional information officially requested from and provided by the State Party: No additional information was requested, beyond that requested in the Committee decision noted above. IUCN was represented at a meeting “Sanganeb Atoll and Dugonab Bay - Mukkawar Island National Parks in Sudan: Strengthening scientific partnerships to support the listing of both Marine Protected Areas as a UNESCO World Heritage Site” held on 25 February 2016 and hosted by the World Heritage Centre, and organised with the State Party in partnership with the Cousteau Foundation, the Red Sea University and others. The report of this meeting was also submitted as supplementary information to the nomination.

c) Additional literature consulted: Various sources listed in the nomination, and in the earlier IUCN evaluation report were consulted. No additional literature was consulted in reviewing the referral, except the additional information submitted by the State Party noted above.

d) Consultations: The IUCN representatives from the 2014 field visit, in addition to earlier consultees.

e) Field visit: Original field mission undertaken by Naomi Doak and Hany El Shaer, 9 - 17 September 2014. As this was a referral decision, no further field visit was undertaken.

f) Date of IUCN approval of this report: May 2016

2. SUMMARY OF NATURAL VALUES

The nomination presents a configuration conceptually similar to the previous proposal, with two component parts based on two marine national parks, and a connecting buffer zone. Thus the overall description of the values in the previous (39COM) IUCN evaluation remains substantially valid, but there are a number of changes to be noted. These firstly relate to the boundaries. The most significant of these judging by the revised but small scale maps submitted is the excision of some parts of Dugonab Bay–Mukkawar Island Marine National Park (DMNP), which now appear to be included in the buffer zone. The new nomination suggests that the Sanganeb Marine National Park (SMNP) component part has an area of 65,500ha and DMNP is 25,660ha, but these figures appear to be incorrect, since SMNP is clearly a smaller

area that DMNP (in the original nomination the area SMNP is given as 691ha) and DMNP appears to have reduced in mapped area, but not to the extent which is presented within the revised nomination. DMNP was listed as 198,832 ha in the original nomination. The information provided is further conflicted as the Executive Summary table of components and areas provides different areas to that provided in the body of the nomination dossier and neither set of figures adds up to the totals given. The maps provided in the additional information are not sufficient to be able to determine the reasons for these differences. In addition some of the cardinal points of the boundaries are mapped differently in the earlier and revised nomination, which is likely a mapping error rather than a change in boundaries.

The points raised by IUCN previously remain to be considered regarding whether the precise attributes that convey Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) in the marine environment are included within the boundaries of the nominated property as revised, and further information is not provided to clarify this matter. IUCN recalls its suggestions to consider a number of specific areas with potential values, some of which were identified in the much earlier 1983 evaluation of Sanganeb Atoll.

Two further notable changes are indicated in the revised nomination. The first is that the State Party is not including criterion (viii) as a basis for OUV. IUCN was less convinced in its earlier (39COM) evaluation of the potential under this criterion than the justification for the other three natural criteria, and concurs that the removal of this criterion simplifies the overall evaluation by focusing on the established potential for OUV in relation to criteria (vii), (ix) and (x). Secondly the State Party has eliminated the suggestion that "The Red Sea Hills, rising over 1500m, create a stunning backdrop to the area's gently sloping coastal plain" as an element of the justification of criterion (vii). IUCN had noted that this attribute was not within the nominated property, creating a question on the appropriateness of the boundaries of the property. IUCN interprets the boundary modifications to the DMNP component part of the property may potentially be related to this change in the description of OUV, although text from the nomination also makes clear these areas are important in protecting the coastline areas of the nominated property. IUCN consider that the property's underwater scenic values are potentially sufficient to justify criterion (vii) without considering the wider setting of the property that is provided by the Red Sea Hills, so is of the view that this change does not make a crucial impact on the case for Outstanding Universal Value under criterion (vii).

3. COMPARISONS WITH OTHER AREAS

No additional considerations are provided in relation to this aspect of the nomination. IUCN considers that comparative analysis has demonstrated the potential of the nominated property to meet criteria (vii), (ix) and (x) which are the criteria now proposed within the revised nomination. Nevertheless additional

comparative analysis of any of the attributes with potential to add to this potential is lacking.

4. INTEGRITY, PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 Protection

IUCN previously evaluated the protection of the nominated property as meeting the requirements of the Operational Guidelines, whilst noting some concerns. IUCN considers the promised new work on the management of the property, as noted below, has the potential to rectify those concerns. It is clearly a fundamental requirement that the precise boundaries are fully clarified, with adequate maps. There is no additional information included in the nomination that specifically relates to protection, and therefore IUCN reiterates its previous conclusion.

IUCN, whilst noting concerns regarding coordination between levels of government and the relative protection of the buffer zone, considers that the protection status of the property meets the requirements of the Operational Guidelines.

4.2 Boundaries

IUCN notes that, in relation to the requests noted in the Committee's decision, the recommendation to revise the boundaries has not been directly discussed with IUCN since the 39th Session, although the State Party has received some support late in the process of revision via the African World Heritage Fund. As noted above, IUCN considers that the revised boundaries of the nominated property are not fully clear, and that the additional information provided does not clarify the actual boundaries, nor the areas of the proposed component parts, and nor, most importantly, whether appropriate attributes of OUV in the marine environment are included in the property or not. The adjustment of the landward boundary in DMNP is also not explained. Given this uncertainty, and the broadly similar configuration of boundaries, IUCN maintains its earlier evaluation that the boundaries as defined are not adequate. IUCN considers that the boundaries of the property need to be both more clearly described, and possibly further amended. It remains essential that the State Party clarify the boundaries and buffer zone of the property with both IUCN and the World Heritage Centre, consistent with the mapping standards prescribed in the Operational Guidelines.

IUCN considers that the boundaries of the property do not meet the requirements of the Operational Guidelines, notably as key attributes of potential Outstanding Universal Value are not included in the nominated property.

4.3 Management

The additional information confirms progress is being made to address the shortcomings in protection and management noted in the previous evaluation. In addition the meeting held in UNESCO in February 2016 assembled an impressive range of technical

partners and confirmed further information on progress in relation to establishing effective management of the property. Nevertheless the work on the preparation of an appropriate management plan is still at an early stage, and is not completed.

Specifically, the revised nomination notes two areas of particular focus in strengthening management. Firstly on management planning for the overall property, the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA) has offered in December 2015 to support producing a common integrated management plan for the property (and the nomination notes is also supporting the completion of the management plan for DMNP). The nomination reports that the Wildlife Conservation General Administration (WCGA) has started steps to prepare an Integrated Management Plan for the property, and states that this will be “comprehensive, participatory and with a clear framework of approved policy”. Further details on the scope of this plan are included in a new Annex (Annex 13) to the nomination. Secondly the nomination notes that “the Cousteau Organization is willing to develop a partnership with WCGA for developing Ecotourism Strategy for the property”. The nomination finally indicates that recruitment of 35 rangers has been achieved, a significant increase in staffing capacity over the number cited in the previous nomination which was only 15. Over and above the staffing increases, no additional substantive information was provided on commitments to increase financial resources for the management of the nominated property.

IUCN considers this progress in strengthening management is to be welcomed, and it is clear that there are a range of significant partners who are increasing their engagement to secure the necessary work to enable the nomination to be completed, who participated in the February 2016 meeting held in UNESCO. However at the present time the necessary management planning for the nominated property is clearly not yet in place, and this work must be completed in order for the property to meet the requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines. IUCN further notes the importance of settling the agreed boundaries for the nominated property and the buffer zone as a precursor to completing the management plan, and the proposed ecotourism strategy.

IUCN considers that the management of the property does not meet the requirements of the Operational Guidelines.

4.4 Community

No detailed information is provided in the supplementary information regarding community matters, but it is noted that there are projects related to livelihoods being undertaken. As noted above, it is indicated that the process of preparing the management plan is intended to be participatory.

4.5 Threats

The situation in the previous IUCN report remains a reasonable summary of threats to the property.

In conclusion, for the reasons outlined above concerning boundaries and the need to complete the necessary management plans for the property, IUCN considers that the integrity, protection and management of the property do not meet the requirements of the Operational Guidelines.

5. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

5.1 Justification for Serial Approach

IUCN notes that the nominated property comprises two geographically separated areas with the linking marine buffer zone not included in the nominated area. IUCN previously considered the serial approach had not been fully justified and considers that more work is needed to outline how the serial approach being proposed, and the role of the linking buffer zone, will provide the most effective option for the protection of Outstanding Universal Value. In particular the serial approach also needs to be justified in terms of the choice of areas and their values which collectively contribute to demonstrating Outstanding Universal Value.

6. APPLICATION OF THE CRITERIA

Sanganeb Marine National Park and Dugonab Bay - Mukkawar Island Marine National Park has been nominated under the natural criteria (vii), (ix) and (x).

Criterion (vii): Superlative natural phenomenon or natural beauty and aesthetic importance

Sanganeb is an isolated, atoll-shaped coral reef structure in the central Red Sea, 25 km off the shoreline of Sudan. Surrounded by 800 m deep water, the atoll coral reef systems are part of the northernmost coral reef systems in the world. Sanganeb is a largely pristine marine ecosystem providing some of the most impressive dive sites on earth resulting from the very high diversity of physiographic zones and reefs characterized by an extraordinary structural complexity. Dugonab Bay and Mukkawar Island is situated 125 km north of Port Sudan and includes within its boundaries a highly diverse system of coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass beds, beaches, intertidal areas, islands and islets. The clear visibility of the water, coral diversity, marine species and pristine habitats and colourful coral reef communities create a striking land and seascape. It is not clear whether all the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value are included in the nominated area.

IUCN considers that a reconfigured nomination, addressing integrity issues, including in relation to boundaries, has the potential to meet this criterion.

Criterion (ix): Ecosystems/communities and ecological/biological processes

SMNP-DMNP is located in an ecologically and globally outstanding region, the Red Sea, which is the world's northernmost tropical sea, the warmest and most saline of the world's seas. The serial site is located in a Global 200 priority biogeographic region: the Red Sea and a priority marine province, the Gulf of Aden. The nominated property is part of a larger transition area between northern and southern Red Sea biogeographic zones and contains diverse and mostly undisturbed habitats which are outstanding examples of the northernmost tropical coral reef system on earth. The nominated property and its surrounding area include reef systems (13 different bio-physiographic reef zones in SMNP), atoll, lagoon, islet, sand flats, seagrass, and mangrove habitats and display a diversity of reefs, from living reefs to ancient fossil reefs. These habitats are home to populations of seabirds (20 species), marine mammals (11 species), fish (300 species), corals (260 species), sharks, manta rays and marine turtles, and the site provides important feeding grounds for what is perhaps the most northerly population of endangered Dugong. SMNP is an important larvae export area and hosts spawning sites for commercial fish species. The nominated property contains features that are central to potential Outstanding Universal Value, but important attributes of the global significance of the region may not be included in the nominated area.

IUCN considers that a reconfigured nomination, addressing integrity issues, including in relation to boundaries, has the potential to meet this criterion.

Criterion (x): Biodiversity and threatened species

The property represents a complete and relatively intact marine ecosystem of global and regional significance, within the Red Sea. It is home to a rich reef ecosystem, containing over 300 fish species and includes some of the most expansive seagrass beds of the Red Sea, and containing at least 9 of the 10 regional seagrass species. It is also home to globally significant populations of endangered species including sharks, cetaceans, and marine turtles with the eastern shore of Mukkawar Island being one of the most important marine turtle nesting sites in the Red Sea.

Dugonab Bay supports a globally significant dugong population, significant given that the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf host the last remaining healthy populations in the Indian Ocean. The whale and manta ray seasonal aggregations in DMNP are unique to the entire Western Indian Ocean Region and the marine park is internationally recognized as an Important Bird Area for both resident and migratory birds. DMNP is also unique as a home to species from different biogeographic origins: both northern and southern Red Sea species. SMNP lies in a regional hotspot for reef fish endemism. The property generally supports a higher than average subset of endemics found in the Red Sea, including the richest diversity of coral west of

India and a number of coral species which are at the limits of their global range. Key attributes of Outstanding Universal Value may not be currently included in the nominated area.

IUCN considers that a reconfigured nomination, addressing integrity issues, including in relation to boundaries, has the potential to meet 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/16/40.COM/8B.ADD and WHC/16/40.COM/INF.8B2.ADD;

2. Recalling Decision 39 COM 8B.3;

3. Refers the nomination of the **Sanganeb Marine National Park and Dugonab Bay – Mukkawar Island Marine National Park (Sudan)** back to the State Party, taking note of the strong potential to meet natural criteria (vii), (ix) and (x), in order to allow it to revise and complete the nomination, addressing the following actions:

- a) Review, with the support of IUCN, the boundaries of the nominated property to better define the nominated area and buffer zones to ensure that all the natural attributes which contribute to the globally significant values are appropriately included and that integrity is enhanced. Clear maps at a large scale, with a clear and specific description of the nominated property should be provided, and a clear statement on the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value that are confirmed as being located within the property boundary;
- b) Complete the work to update the management plans for Sanganeb Marine National Park and Dugonab Marine National Park and to complete the preparation of an integrated management framework for the whole property that guides coordinated inter-agency policy and management and promotes the effective involvement of different stakeholders including local communities;
- c) Demonstrate increased financial resources to support the operational aspects of effective management of the nominated property and provide assurances to the World Heritage Committee on commitments to maintain ongoing sustainable financing.

4. Urges the State Party to work directly with the World Heritage Centre and IUCN in order to assure that the actions that it undertakes to revise the nomination fully meet the necessary requirements of the Operational Guidelines.

Map 1: Revised nominated property and buffer zone

