

AFRICA

**SEHLABATHEBE NATIONAL PARK
(Extension of uKhahlamba / Drakensberg Park)**

LESOTHO



WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

SELABATHEBE NATIONAL PARK (LESOTHO), PROPOSED EXTENSION OF UKHAHLAMBA DRAKENSBERG PARK (SOUTH AFRICA) – ID No. 985 bis

IUCN RECOMMENDATION TO WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE: To approve the extension under natural criteria.

Key paragraphs of Operational Guidelines:

77 Property meet natural criteria.

78 Property meets conditions of integrity and protection and management requirements.

Background note: Sehlabathebe National Park (SNP) has been nominated by the Kingdom of Lesotho as an extension to the existing uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park (UDP) World Heritage site in South Africa. The nomination is the result of collaboration between the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa dating from 1997 and in the context of the transnational conservation initiative known as the “Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation Area” that includes the Maloti highlands in Lesotho and the KwaZulu Natal Drakensberg Mountains in South Africa. A bilateral Memorandum of Understanding signed by Lesotho and South Africa is in place. In the event that SNP is approved as an extension to the UDP World Heritage site both Governments have proposed a name change of the property to “Maloti Drakensberg Transboundary World Heritage Site”.

1. DOCUMENTATION

a) Date nomination received by IUCN: 25 March 2012

b) Additional information officially requested from and provided by the State Party: None requested

c) Additional literature consulted: Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Government of the Republic of South Africa (2008) **Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Government of the Republic of South Africa in respect to the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation and Development Area** (signed 1st December 2008). Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho (2005) **Draft Nature Conservation Bill**. Government of the Republic of South Africa (2012) **UDP World Heritage Site Funding Proposal for Buffer Zone**. Government of the Republic of South Africa (2012) **UDP Buffer Zone Technical Committee minutes for 2012** (5 meetings held). Government of the Republic of South Africa **UDP Fire Management Report**. IUCN (1999) **Technical Evaluation: uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park (Republic of South Africa) ID No. 985**. Online: http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/985.pdf. IUCN (2012). **IUCN Red List of Threatened Species** Online: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/search> accessed 18/01/2013. Kopij, G. (2002) **The birds of Sehlabathebe National Park, Lesotho**. Koedoe - African Protected Area Conservation and Science; Vol 45, No 1 (2002), 65-78. doi: 10.4102/koedoe.v45i1.15. **Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Park (uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site/Sehlabathebe National Park) Joint Management Plan 2008-2012**. Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Project (2007) **Spatial Assessment of the Biodiversity Priorities in the Lesotho Highlands**. Ministry of Tourism, Environment and

Culture, Kingdom of Lesotho (2012). **Nomination of Sehlabathebe National Park - SNP (as an extension to the uKhahlamba Drakensberg World Heritage Site - South Africa)**. 51pp + maps. **Sehlabathebe National Park Management Plan 2008 – 2013**. **Sehlabathebe Tourism Business Plan 2008**.

d) Consultations: 10 external reviewers. The mission met with high level representatives of Lesotho’s Ministry of Environment Culture and Tourism in addition to local staff with responsibility for the management of SNP. Meetings were also held with local stakeholders, businesses and local community representatives from the Local Government Community Council made up of representatives from the different villages neighbouring the park and the village chief and the Community Conservation Forum covering others.

The mission also met with Senior Officers from South Africa’s Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism as well as staff from the UDP World Heritage Site and personnel responsible for transfrontier conservation activities.

e) Field Visit: Moses Wafula Mapesa and John Kinahan (ICOMOS), 6-13 October 2012

f) Date of IUCN approval of this report: April 2013

2. SUMMARY OF NATURAL VALUES

Sehlabathebe National Park (SNP) has been nominated as an extension of the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park (UDP) World Heritage site, South Africa which was inscribed in 2000 as a mixed site [(i), (iii), (vii), (x)]. SNP is nominated under the same mixed criteria as UDP. The evaluation of the nomination in relation to cultural criteria is undertaken by ICOMOS.

The SNP is situated on the eastern Maloti Drakensberg escarpment and is contiguous with the UDP at its southernmost tip sharing an international border between Lesotho and South Africa running approximately 12 kilometers in a west-easterly direction. Qacha's Nek, the closest regional center is about 100 kms south west of the park. The Sehlabathebe village cluster sits on the western boundary of the park. The park can be accessed by road from Maseru, an 8 hour drive, or from South Africa near Qacha's Nek through a border crossing.

The property is gazetted and managed as an IUCN Category II national park within Lesotho's national legislative framework. The nominated extension is 6,500 ha which if added to the existing UDP World Heritage site of 242,813 ha would total 249,313 ha as a transnational World Heritage site. The buffer zone of the property on the Lesotho side is 46,630 ha which comprises the Sehlabathebe Range Management Area, a sparsely populated area with some crop cultivation but predominantly livestock rearing. The buffer zones in Lesotho and South Africa have not yet been gazetted although on the South African side a process of formal gazettal has been advanced. SNP receives approximately 800mm p.a. of precipitation which falls mainly in summer. Mist is a common phenomenon during summer. In the winter months, it is cold and dry with temperatures below zero and frost and snow are a common occurrence. The mean annual temperature is 16°C but there are high daily and seasonal variations. SNP is situated on the topographically rugged eastern escarpment of the Drakensberg where very deep river valleys cut into the relatively young African surface of the Lesotho Plateau at an average of 2,450m above sea level. The topography of the park is undulating and most of the ridges in the park were formed due to the existence of several dolerite dykes that are resistant to weathering. An important factor in the landscape of SNP is its location at the interface of the lower lying sedimentary and overlying igneous sequences and due to prominent tectonic block faulting, the SNP area was uplifted relative to the rest of the Drakensberg escarpment resulting into unique outcrops of Clarens Sandstone formation. It is believed that the periglacial weathering during the last ice age resulted in the formation of the distinctive caves, rock pools, tarns, pillars, cliffs and arches of the Clarens sandstone. This landscape assemblage is not found within the UDP World Heritage site.

The two areas of UDP and SNP form the most important water catchment area for Lesotho and South Africa. The SNP is situated on the edge of the watershed that divides the Senqu-Orange River draining into the Atlantic and the Thukela River flowing into the Indian Ocean. As opposed to UDPs eastward flowing drainage, the SNP drainage flows west. The SNP boasts extensive, near-pristine wetlands in 3 categories: tarns, which are lakes or pools with no outlet; riparian marshes found along rivers like ox bow lakes and freshwater drainage marshes as rivers. A comprehensive spatial assessment of Biodiversity priorities in the Lesotho highlands was conducted by the Transfrontier Project in 2007. SNP shares a

significant number of species in common with UDP. The park's vegetation consists of Themeda-Festuca Alpine veld, a high altitude grassland type consisting of a mixture of sub-tropical temperate grass species with a wide variety of monocotyledons and dicotyledons. The high altitude of the area makes it an important center of plant endemism. SNP has a reported 515 plant species, 59 of which are endemic to the park. The tarns of SNP provide the only known protection for the globally endangered endemic plant *Aponogeton ranunculiflorus*. A mammal survey conducted in 1988 recorded 32 species including Grey Rhebok (*Pelea capreolus*), eland, oribi, ice rat, golden mole, common mole, black backed jackal, mountain reedbeek, spotted neck otter and clawless otter.

Referenced records in the SNP and the UDP/SNP management plans indicate that a total of 106 bird species have been found in SNP. Another record attributed to Kopij (2002) lists 117 bird species. SNP provides nesting habitat for the globally endangered Bearded Vulture and is foraging sites for the Cape Vulture. No specific SNP reptile and amphibian surveys have been carried out, however, anecdotal reports indicate 31 reptile species and a number of amphibian species which are adapted to mountain aquatic.

Six species of fish, 4 naturally occurring and 2 introduced species of trout have been recorded in UDP/SNP. The critically endangered Maloti Minnow (*Pseudobarbus quathlambae*) only exists in SNP with the Minnow only known from one old record in UDP. Several recent searches in UDP have failed to find any record of the fish in UDP. The only viable population of Maloti Minnow is found upstream of the Tsoelikane Waterfall in SNP. Although the Maloti Minnow was abundant below the waterfall and in other rivers in the park, it is no longer the case due to predation by introduced trout. The habitat of the Maloti Minnow has therefore shrunk by over 95% in the last 100 years. Trout were introduced for purposes of tourism, however, should they ever be introduced above the waterfall it is likely to lead to the extinction of the Maloti Minnow.

The invertebrate fauna of SNP and UDP is poorly known. SNP has never been formally surveyed for invertebrates, however records show 44 species of South African dragonflies and 74 species of butterflies have been recorded in UDP/SNP. 24 species of millipedes and 4 species of molluscs are endemic to UDP/SNP. Endemic genera and species of ostracod (mussel shrimp), copepod and anostracan (4 species of fairy shrimp) and crustaceans are believed to occur in rock pools, tarns and rivers and streams.

3. COMPARISONS WITH OTHER AREAS

The nomination dossier includes a limited comparison on natural values. In making comparisons with other areas it is important to note that the nomination is a relatively small extension of the UDP World Heritage site.

SNP's values are presented as complementary to those of UDP and therefore need to be considered in that context. In addition to the commonalities, there are distinct phenomena unique to the SNP which do not exist in UDP. For example while the physical beauty of UDP lies with basaltic buttresses, incisive cutbacks, golden sandstones, steep sided river valleys, caves and rock shelters; SNP's superlative natural beauty, a result of uplifting of part of the Maloti Drakensberg due to tectonic block faulting, is a unique outcrop of the Clarens Sandstone lifted higher than the rest of the Drakensberg escarpment and where subsequent periglacial weathering of the sandstone has led to the natural sculpturing of the rocks in amazing forms and shapes including arches, cliffs, pillars, tarns and rock pools. These are within a relatively expansive grassland area with wetlands and a spectacular meandering river with ox bow lakes flowing through a rocky gorge to a picturesque waterfall. In addition to the physical beauty is the diversity of plants with a mosaic of colorful flowers in spring and summer. As noted in the description above, there are also biodiversity values represented in SNP that are not present in UDP. These features ensure that SNP adds significantly to the superlative qualities of the existing UDP World Heritage Site.

In summary SNP's natural values are notable despite its relative small size of 6,500 ha and make a valuable addition to the much larger UDP World Heritage site. Whilst SNP does not, on its own, meet the relevant WH criteria it adds significantly to the integrity of the existing property through the addition of important natural attributes and features that are complementary to UDP. This provides a clear basis to support the extension as proposed.

4. INTEGRITY, PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

4.1. Protection

SNP was established as a Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park in 1970 and legally established as a National Park in 2001. There is a sound national legal framework aimed at guaranteeing long term protection, namely: National Parks Act, 1975, Environment Act 2008, Local Government Act, 1997, Historical Monuments, Relics, Fauna and Flora Act 1967. In addition a draft Nature Conservation Act is designed to provide overall guidance for nature conservation. The area is administered by the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture with delegated management authority to the Director of Parks under the Department of Environment.

At International level is the bilateral Memorandum of Understanding between Lesotho and South Africa which provides a clear commitment for the joint management of SNP and UDP and the adjoining buffer zones.

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

4.2 Boundaries

The SNP boundaries are the same as the boundaries for the nominated extension. The boundaries are clearly defined, marked on the ground and well known by all neighboring communities. Although there is evidence of previous access and use of resources in the park including grazing, harvesting of grass and medicinal plants and even poaching; there has been tremendous ecological recovery of the grassland and wetland ecosystems and the park's vegetation can on the whole be described to be in good condition.

The buffer zone is appropriate as all areas of Outstanding Universal Value are located within SNP. The buffer zone is subject to community based cultivation and grazing. The existing buffer zones in Lesotho and also South Africa have not yet been formally gazetted despite good progress to this end in South Africa.

IUCN considers that despite the delay in formally gazetted the buffer zones, the boundaries of the nominated extension meet the requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines.

4.3 Management

The management capacity of SNP is very limited, including in relation to the management of tourism. Whilst there is a Park Manager, there are hardly any technical and support staff on site. Although joint management and business plans (2008-2012) are in place for SNP and UDP, their implementation has been affected due to inadequate staffing and financial resources. However, local involvement is strong due to a supportive local leadership and reinforced by the creation of the Community Conservation Forum. A new law, the Nature Conservation Act, 2005, is pending approval and is expected to provide guidance on staffing and resource allocation for SNP.

Technical support is needed to build capacity and on issues of planning (including legal and policy review) and community awareness. SNP is being managed as part of an internationally renowned transfrontier conservation initiative. More advantage needs to be taken of this and the ability of the Joint Management Committee to share and build enhanced capacity in Lesotho.

IUCN considers the management of the nominated extension in relation to natural values is barely sufficient to meet the requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines, and requires significant strengthening, in the context of achieving strong overall management of the extended property.

4.4 Community

In addition to the support evident at the national level, local field officers and stakeholders met by the mission expressed strong and consistent support for the nomination. IUCN has not received any objections to the listing of the property.

Records indicate that agricultural communities moved into the SNP area between 600 and 400 years ago bringing with them livestock that were grazed high up in the mountains in the park as recently as 50 years ago. In 1970 when the Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park were declared, people and livestock were moved from the area. Eviction of people and livestock from SNP created a tense relationship between the community and the park authorities. It is only in the last 5 years that community relations have been restored through the formation of the Community Conservation Forum – a mechanism that allows for community input in decision – making on SNP park management. It is essential that this input is retained and supported.

The National Environment Policy, 1996; the National Livestock and Range Management Policy, 1996 and the Community-based Policy reinforce the critical partnership required with the community for the long-term protection of the park.

4.5 Threats

Threats to the natural values in the form of poaching, grazing, plant resource utilization and encroachment have largely been contained. The management of these threats seems however, to be linked to the promise of new tourism developments in the park and surrounding areas and the expectation that this will bring employment opportunities and increased income. The implementation of the tourism business plan alongside the SNP and UDP/SNP management plans, together with sustained management effort would considerably reduce the risks associated with tourism development.

The only potential threat to the endangered Maloti Minnow is the possibility of introducing trout above the falls which would likely lead to the extinction of the population. The likelihood of this occurring is considered to be low, but requires constant surveillance.

In summary, IUCN considers the nominated property meets the overall conditions of integrity and protection and management requirements as outlined in the Operational Guidelines.

5. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

5.1 Upstream support

IUCN notes the nominated extension has benefitted from upstream support via the programme of courses to support nominations delivered by the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF) in partnership with the World Heritage Centre, IUCN, ICOMOS, ICCROM and others. The nomination demonstrates the positive results from these courses organised by AWHF.

6. APPLICATION OF CRITERIA

The Selabathebe National Park (Lesotho) has been nominated as an extension of the uKhahlamba

Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site (South Africa) under natural criteria (vii) and (ix), and under cultural criteria.

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

The natural beauty of Selabathebe National Park results from uplifting of part of the Maloti Drakensberg due to tectonic block faulting to create a unique outcrop of the Clarens Sandstone lifted higher than the rest of the Drakensberg escarpment. Here subsequent periglacial weathering of the sandstone led to the natural sculpturing of the rocks in dramatic forms and shapes including arches, cliffs, pillars, tarns and rock pools, within an extensive grassland area with wetlands and a meandering river with ox bow lakes flowing through a rocky gorge to a picturesque waterfall. Adding to this physical landscape beauty is the diversity of plants with a mosaic of colorful flowers in spring and summer. The distinctive yet fragile mountain grasslands of SNP scenically complement those of uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage site.

IUCN considers that SNP, as a nominated extension to the existing uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage site, enhances the integrity of the existing property in relation to this criterion.

Criterion (x): Biodiversity and threatened species

The nominated extension will add to uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage site an elevated, western flowing watershed which is host to flora and fauna of global scientific importance, classified as rare and endemic to Selabathebe National Park. The park's wetlands are currently the only officially protected area in the country where the endangered and endemic Maloti Minnow (*Pseudobarbus quathlambae*) occurs. The site provides critical nesting habitat for the globally endangered Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*) and the Bearded Vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*). The proposed extension of uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage site to include Selabathebe National Park will add value to the conservation of these species, particularly to the diversity of fish species as the Maloti Minnow is considered extinct in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage site.

The Maloti Drakensberg has been identified as an important centre of plant diversity in Southern Africa protecting high levels of endemism and globally threatened plant species. Selabathebe National Park hosts more than 20% of the plant species in the whole Maloti Drakensberg area and more than 10% of the park's plant species are endemic to the park. Selabathebe National Park contains wetland and African alpine tundra ecosystems that significantly add to the value of uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage site.

IUCN considers that SNP, as a nominated extension to the existing uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage site, enhances the integrity of the existing property in relation to this criterion.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

IUCN notes that its recommendation will need to be harmonized with that of ICOMOS in the eventual consolidated draft decision to the World Heritage Committee, considering the property is a mixed site, and therefore notes elements of the decision in square brackets pending consideration of the cultural criteria:

[The World Heritage Committee,]

1. Having examined Documents WHC-13/37.COM/8B and WHC-13/37.COM/INF.8B2;]

2. [Approves as an extension of uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage site under natural criteria (vii), and (x), to include the **Sehlabathebe National Park, Lesotho**, and also approves the new name for the extended property the Maloti Drakensberg Transboundary World Heritage Site;]

3. [Adopts the following Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the transnational property] [IUCN's below draft is adapted from the existing and approved SoOUV for the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park WHS; it does not consider the editing necessary in relation to cultural criteria, authenticity, and cultural aspects of integrity, protection and management]:

[Brief synthesis

The Maloti Drakensberg Transboundary World Heritage Site is a transnational property spanning the border between the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa. The property comprises Sehlabathebe National Park (6,500ha) in Lesotho and uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park (242,813 ha) in South Africa. Maloti Drakensberg Transboundary World Heritage Site is renowned for its spectacular natural landscape, importance as a haven for many threatened and endemic species, and for its wealth of rock paintings made by the San people over a period of 4000 years. The property covers an area of 249,313 ha making it the largest protected area complex along the Great Escarpment of southern Africa.

The Maloti Drakensberg range of mountains constitutes the principal water production area in Southern Africa. The areas along the international border between the two countries create a drainage divide on the escarpment that forms the watershed for two of southern Africa's largest drainage basins. The Thukela River from uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park flows eastwards into the Indian Ocean. The Senqu/Orange River from Sehlabathebe National Park flows westwards into the Atlantic Ocean.

Along with its pristine steep-sided river valleys rocky gorges, high altitude grasslands, wetlands and meandering streams, the property has numerous caves and rock shelters containing an estimated 665 rock art sites, and the number of individual images in those sites probably exceeds 35,000. The images depict animals and human beings, and represent the

spiritual life of this people, now no longer living in their original homeland. This art represents an exceptionally coherent tradition that embodies the beliefs and cosmology of the San people over several millennia. There are also paintings done during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, attributable to Bantu speaking people.

Extending along most of KwaZulu-Natal's south-western border with Lesotho, the property provides a vital refuge for more than 250 endemic plant species and their associated fauna. It also holds almost all of the remaining subalpine and alpine vegetation in KwaZulu-Natal, including extensive high altitude wetlands above 2,750m and is a RAMSAR site. The Park has been identified as an Important Bird Area, and forms a critical part of the Lesotho Highlands Endemic Bird Area.

Criteria

Criterion (i)

To be considered by ICOMOS – current statement: The rock art of the Drakensberg is the largest and most concentrated group of rock paintings in Africa south of the Sahara and is outstanding both in quality and diversity of subject.

Criterion (iii)

To be considered by ICOMOS – current statement: The San people lived in the mountainous Drakensberg area for more than four millennia, leaving behind them a corpus of outstanding rock art which throws much light on their way of life and their beliefs.

Criterion (vii)

The property has exceptional natural beauty with soaring basaltic buttresses, incisive dramatic cutbacks and golden sandstone ramparts. Rolling high altitude grasslands, wetlands, alpine tarns, the pristine steep-sided river valleys and rocky gorges also contribute to the beauty of the site. Sehlabathebe National Park in Lesotho contributes an unusual uplifted area with a visually spectacular series of sculptured arches, caves, cliffs, pillars and rock pools.

Criterion (x)

The property contains significant natural habitats for in situ conservation of biological diversity. It has outstanding species richness, particularly of plants. It is recognised as a Global Centre of Plant Diversity and endemism, and occurs within its own floristic region – the Drakensberg Alpine Region of South Africa. It is also within a globally important endemic bird area and is notable for the occurrence of a number of globally threatened species, such as the Cape Vulture, Yellow-breasted Pipit, Bearded Vulture and the Maloti Minnow, an endangered endemic fish found only within Sehlabathebe National Park. The diversity of habitats is outstanding, ranging across alpine plateaux, steep rocky slopes and river valleys. These habitats protect a high level of endemic and threatened species.

Integrity

To also be considered by ICOMOS – The Maloti Drakensberg Transboundary World Heritage Site, composed of 12 protected areas in

South Africa established between 1903 and 1973 and in 1970 has a long history of effective conservation management. Covering 249,313 ha in area, it is large enough to survive as a natural area and to maintain natural values. It includes 4 proclaimed Wilderness areas that cover almost 50% of the site. While largely unaffected by human development, the property remains vulnerable to external land uses including agriculture, plantation forestry, encroachment, wind farm and ecotourism, although agreements between Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and local stakeholders have been implemented to manage these threats.

Invasive species and fire also threaten the integrity of the site, along with land claims in certain areas, infrastructural developments, soil erosion caused by fire and tourist impacts on vulnerable alpine trails, grazing and poaching.

Boundary issues highlighted at time of inscription included the gap belonging to the amaNgwane and amaZizi Traditional Council between the northern and much larger southern section of the South African section of the site. While planning mechanisms restrict development above the 1,650m contour to maintain ecological integrity, it was recommended that a cooperative agreement between the amaNgwane and amaZizi Traditional Council and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife be envisaged. Extending conservation areas by agreements with privately-owned land along the escarpment to the south of the property was also recommended. Finally an important step to strengthening integrity has been the development of the Drakensberg Maloti Transfrontier Conservation and Development Area, which has recognised the importance of a Transboundary Peace Park linking the Sehlabathebe National Park (and eventually the contiguous Sehlabathebe and Mohotlong Range Management Areas) in Lesotho with uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park. Project Coordinating Committees in both KwaZulu-Natal and Lesotho are cooperating in a planning process.

The property contains the main corpus of rock art related to the San in this area. Although the area has changed relatively little since the caves were inhabited, management practices, the removal of trees (which formerly sheltered the paintings) and the smoke from burning grass both have the capacity to impact adversely on the fragile images of the rock shelters, as does unregulated public access.

Authenticity

To be considered by ICOMOS – The authenticity of the paintings, and their shelter and cave settings, as a reflection of the beliefs of the San peoples, are without question. The images are however vulnerable to fading that could lessen their ability to display their meaning.

Protection and management requirements

To also be considered by ICOMOS – In uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park management of the Park is guided by an Integrated Management Plan with subsidiary plans, and is undertaken in accordance with the World Heritage Convention Act, 1999 (Act No. 49 of 1999); National Environmental Management: Protected Areas

the Sehlabathebe National Park in Lesotho established Act, 2003 (Act 57 of 2003); National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act, 2004 (Act No 10 of 2004); KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Management Amendment Act (No 5 of 1999); World Heritage Convention Operational Guidelines; and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife policies. In terms of this legislation, all development within or outside the property is subjected to an environmental impact assessment, which considers the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. In addition all World Heritage Sites are recognized as protected areas, meaning that mining or prospecting will be completely prohibited from taking place within the property or the proclaimed buffer zone. Furthermore, any unsuitable development with a potential impact on the property will not be permitted by the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs who is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

In Sehlabathebe National Park Lesotho's National Parks Act, 1975, Environment Act 2008, Local Government Act, 1997, Historical Monuments, Relics, Fauna and Flora Act 1967 provide for protection. In addition a draft Nature Conservation Act is designed to provide overall guidance for nature conservation. The Park is administered by the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture. A Park Management Plan and Business Plan are in place to guide the future of the Park, however, capacity to implement the plans is inadequate. It is important to accelerate the approval and enactment of the draft Nature Conservation Act, 2005 to provide guidance on staffing and resource allocation for Sehlabathebe National Park. A Community Conservation Forum supports community engagement in the management of the park.

The transfrontier collaboration between the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa dates from 1997 and provides the framework for joint planning, management and technical cooperation. A bilateral Memorandum of Understanding signed by Lesotho and South Africa is in place with respect to the Maloti Drakensberg Transboundary World Heritage Site and a Joint Management Committee has been established to support cooperation.

Invasive species and fire are major management challenges. In uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park, at the time of inscription 1% of the Park was covered with alien vegetation, including existing plantations and wattle infestations. This poses a threat to the ecological integrity of the Park as well as to the yield of water from its wetlands and river systems. Park management is actively addressing the removal of alien species. The interaction between the management of invasive species and the management of fire should also be carefully considered, taking into account the effects of fire on fire-sensitive fauna such as endemic frogs. Management of fire and invasive species needs to be addressed jointly by Lesotho and KwaZulu-Natal, ideally within the framework established for transboundary protected area cooperation. Alien invasive trout present a potential threat to the critically endangered Maloti Minnow (*Pseudobarbus quathlambae*) which is endemic to

Sehlabathebe National Park. The only viable population of Maloti Minnow is found upstream of the avoid the introduction of trout above the waterfall to prevent the risk of extinction.

Advantage needs to be taken of the transfrontier context to ensure the transfer of skills and knowledge to build enhanced capacity in Sehlabathebe National Park, and achieve and maintain consistent and effective management across the whole property. There is also a need to ensure an equitable balance between the management of nature and culture through incorporating adequate cultural heritage expertise into the management of the property, in order to ensure that land management processes respect the paintings, that satisfactory natural shelter is provided to the rock art sites, that monitoring of the rock art images is conducted on a regular basis by appropriately qualified conservators, and that access to the paintings is adequately regulated. Furthermore, there is a need to ensure that Cultural Heritage Impact Assessments are undertaken in conjunction with Environmental Impact Assessments for any proposed development affecting the setting within the property.]

4. [Requests the State Party of the Kingdom of Lesotho to carefully consider any proposed development of a wind farms in areas neighbouring the Sehlabathebe National Park and to ensure that such developments do not adversely impact on the outstanding universal value of the Maloti Drakensberg Transboundary World Heritage Site in particular on populations of Bearded Vultures and Cape Vultures in the Lesotho Highlands and the surrounding escarpment of South Africa;]

5. [Considers that approval of Sehlabathebe National Park as an extension to uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage site presents an opportunity to further enhance a number of protection and management issues and therefore requests the State Parties to:

Tsoelikane Waterfall and ongoing efforts are need to

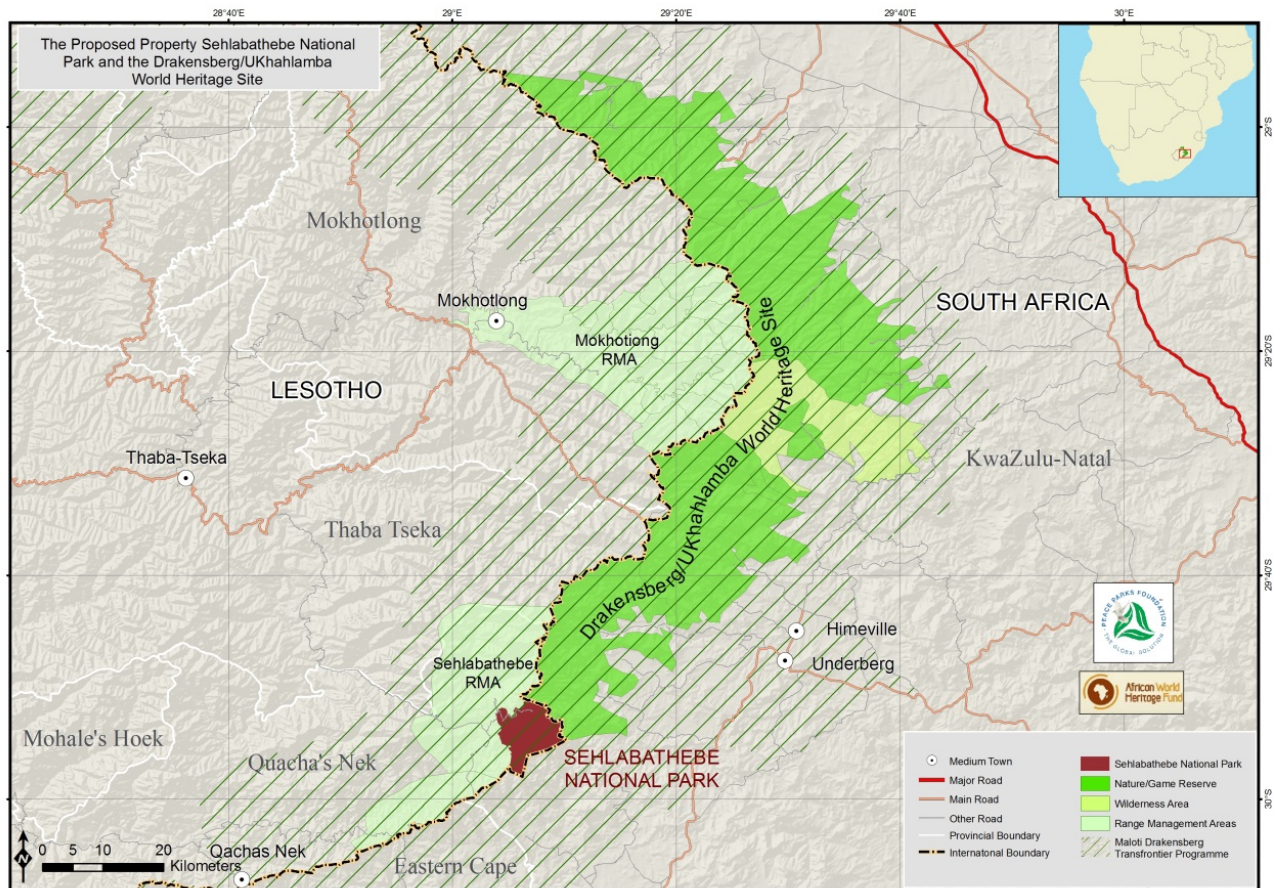
- a) Finalize revisions, amendments and enactment of relevant laws pertinent to the property, in particular to approve and enact the draft Nature Conservation Act 2005 in Lesotho;
- b) Update the current Sehlabathebe National Park and joint Sehlabathebe National Park/ uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park management and business plans which expire by 2013 and to ensure they provide for enhanced cooperation and joint management of both natural and cultural World Heritage values;
- c) Provide significantly enhanced qualified staff within the property, and especially within Sehlabathebe National Park and increased finances to improve the protection of Outstanding Universal Value and to implement planned management interventions;]

6. [Also requests the States Parties to:

- a) Finalize without delay the formal gazettal of the buffer zones surrounding the property;
- b) Enhance transnational collaboration to share technical capacity and ensure improved management capacity within Sehlabathebe National Park;
- c) Formalize the proposed new name of the transnational World Heritage property “Maloti Drakensberg Transboundary World Heritage Site” consistent with the paragraph 167 of the Operational Guidelines;]

7. [Congratulates both States Parties on their cooperation in the nomination of the extension to create a new transboundary World Heritage property, and their collaborative approach to protect and manage the property to the highest international standards.]

Map 1: Proposed extension location



Map 2: Proposed extension and buffer zone

