

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

State Party Report

On the State of Conservation of the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe (Slovakia) (N 1133bis)

In response to the World Heritage Committee Decision WHC 41 COM 7B.4

[For submission by 1 February 2018]

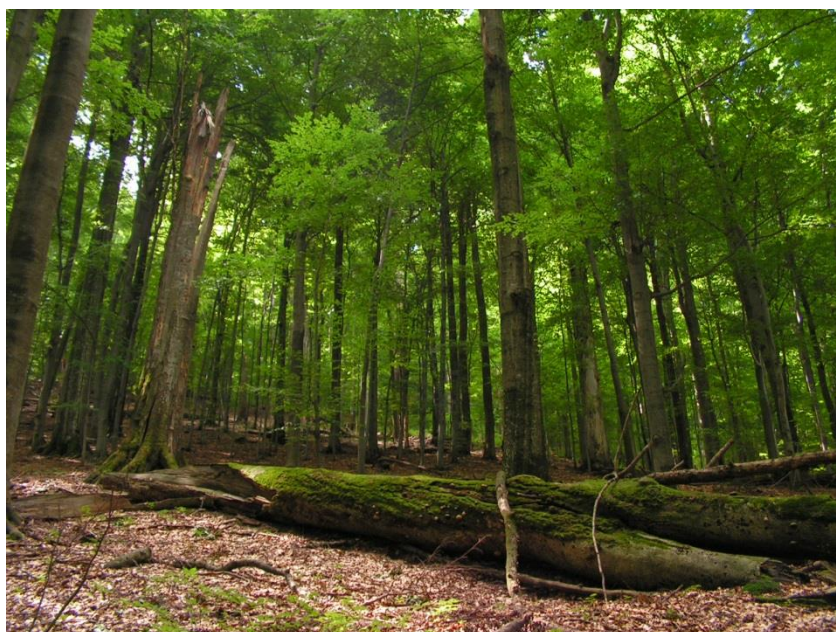


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Front page photo: Forests in the Rožok component

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2007 the beech forests of Carpathians were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as the remnants of the remaining beech forests in a transboundary region of Slovakia and Ukraine. Inaccuracies in the former nomination project as well as an insufficient involvement of the local stakeholders led to the situation when the World Heritage Committee identified several areas in which the improvement is desired in order to ensure protection and conservation of the property. The aim of this report is to show intensive efforts of the Slovak Republic in relation to 41st World Heritage Committee session in Krakow and the progress made towards achieving the recommendations adopted at this meeting.

The Slovak Republic appreciates the fact that the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and other regions of Europe (hereinafter referred to as the "World Heritage property") is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It addresses the challenges identified in the decision of the World Heritage Committee No. 41 COM 7B.4 adopted at 41st World Heritage Committee session in Krakow through its various responsible ministries and other relevant state bodies and organizations and their competences and it wishes to preserve the property inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

In 2017 the issues related to the property were addressed practically at the national level involving a wide range of participants. The issues related to the World Heritage property were addressed also by the Government of the Slovak Republic at its two sessions. Beside a cross-sector working group responsible for addressing the identified shortcomings an independent cross-sector working group the task of which is to prepare an expert proposal for modification of the boundaries of the Slovak component parts of the World Heritage property including their buffer zones in compliance with the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and IUCN was formed. This working group has met four times within two months since its establishment and its goal is to prepare a consensual proposal for the modification of boundaries of the Slovak part of World Heritage property. Simultaneously with the meetings a large number of background maps reflecting the outcomes of meetings were prepared. The process of modification of boundaries along with intermediate outcomes and other issues such as the development of an integrated management plan were discussed at the working meeting with UNESCO/IUCN experts in Paris (7 December 2017). The Slovak Republic highly appreciates the World Heritage Centre's accommodating approach and pursuant to the conclusions adopted at the meeting it makes continuous and intensive efforts to prepare the final delineation of the Slovak part of World Heritage property while closely cooperating with other stakeholders.

Pursuant to Act No. 543/2002 Coll. on Nature and Landscape Protection as amended (hereinafter referred to as Act No. 543/2002 Coll.) the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as "ME SR") implemented several measures in order to find solutions. The State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as "SNC SR") also developed the conservation projects¹ for three planned nature reserves Čerňa (Černiny), Pramenisko Cirochy and Nežabec. The designation of these nature reserves will increase the level of nature protection from the current 3rd and 2nd level to the highest 5th level of protection (a non intervention regime) on the lands beyond the existing ones - the nature reserves protected by law. With regard to different opinions and interests of the relevant parties and the need to tackle the issue of compensations for restriction of common management the further discussions are needed. The discussions continue also in present and they aim to ensure all conditions for the property protection and conservation to maximum extent not only in terms of nature protection but also in terms of benefits for the local people and development of new related activities in this region.

¹ Pursuant to Act No. 543/2002 Coll. the project of protected area conservation defines protected areas and their buffer zones including the zoning and their levels of protection and at the same time it determines the principles for their development with regard to the activities of individual sectors

2. INTRODUCTION - THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY OF THE ANCIENT AND PRIMEVAL BEECH FORESTS OF THE CARPATHIANS AND OTHER REGIONS OF EUROPE

The Slovak components of the UNESCO World Heritage property were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2007 as the Primeval Beech Forests of Carpathians -a bilateral Slovak and Ukrainian property. In 2011 when it was extended by adding further components of Germany it became the part of the trilateral Primeval Beech Forests of Carpathians and the Ancient Beech Forests of Germany. In 2017 an extension by adding further 63 component parts in ten countries (including Ukraine) was approved in Krakow and the total number of components parts increased to 78 in twelve countries of Europe (Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Austria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Italy and Ukraine) and the property became a transnational one. Also the name of the property was changed to the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and other regions of Europe.

The Slovak part of the transnational World Heritage property is located in eastern Slovakia close to the Ukrainian and Polish border and it comprises four components in total. Three components - Havešová, Rožok a Stučica – Bukovské vrchy are the part of the Poloniny National Park, the fourth component Vihorlat is the part of the protected landscape area Vihorlat Mountains. Apart from being the World Natural Heritage the Poloniny National Park has also been the part of a trilateral biosphere reserve Eastern Carpathians since 1992 (together with Poland and since 1998 also with Ukraine) and in 1998 it was awarded the European Diploma by the Council of Europe. The territory of the Poloniny National Park and the Protected Landscape Area Vihorlat Mountains overlap the territories in the European network of protected areas Natura 2000.

At the national level the management and protection of natural heritage is covered by ME SR in accordance with applicable law (Act No. 543/2002 Coll.) and the responsible organization of the environment sector is the Slovak State Nature Conservancy.

3. THE MEMBER STATE RESPONSE TO THE DECISION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE NO. 41 COM 7B.4

(PARAGRAPH AFTER PARAGRAPH)

The following part contains the member states responses to the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee drawn in the conclusions of its 41st session (Decision of the World Heritage Committee No. 41 COM 7B.4, paragraphs 3 to 8), and it offers the additional information on measures taken in order to implement these recommendations

3. The Committee welcomes the efforts of the State Party of Slovakia to explore how sustainable tourism could contribute to sustainable development around the property as well as the information provided by the State Party regarding the establishment of a new nature reserve and of an “ecological functional area” covering parts of the property located within Poloniny National Park, but notes with utmost concern that, despite these measures and the voluntary commitment of some entities involved not to carry out logging operations, only parts of the Slovak components of the property are currently legally protected against logging.

Progress in 2017

- formation of a cross-sector working group involving a wide range of stakeholders
- preparation of two Government resolutions tackling the situation in the Slovak components of World Heritage property and the following approval by the Government of the Slovak Republic; the

Resolutions contain specific tasks for the sectors concerned and coordinate the further procedure at the level of all sectors.

- suspension of logging in the territory of the Slovak components of the World Heritage site
- development of conservation projects in order to designate three new nature reserves

Slovakia addresses these challenges in serious manner and in 2017 the fundamental progress was achieved. A cross-sector working group was established by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and its efforts are directed specifically toward the World Heritage property. The members of the cross-sector working group are the representatives of nine sectors concerned and their expert organizations involving a wide range of stakeholders - the representatives of the following sectors - environment, agriculture and rural development, defence, transport and construction, foreign and European affairs, finance, education, science, research and sport, the Government Office of the Slovak Republic, plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the least developed districts. The Permanent Delegation of the Slovak Republic to UNESCO, the members of Advisory Expert Committee of the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs in the matters concerning UNESCO and the members of the Slovak Prime Minister's Advisory Committee provided the support and consultations to the cross-sector working group as well. It is necessary to highlight the fact that the Slovak Republic intends to tackle the situation in the Slovak components of the property comprehensively and on a national level.

As a result of the working meetings the draft Governmental resolutions later approved by the Government were prepared. The Government of the Slovak Republic addressed the issue of the Slovak part of the World Heritage property at its two sessions on 16 August 2017 and 15 November 2017. As a result of this negotiation the Resolution of the Slovak Government No. 382 of 16 August 2017 (Annex 1), was adopted and it comprises also the document *UNESCO World Heritage property of the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and other Regions of Europe - information on the current state and the proposal of measures*. At the Government meeting held November 2017 the further Resolution of the Slovak Government No. 528 of 15 November 2017(Annex 2) to *the Comprehensive package of measures for UNESCO World Heritage property of the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and other Regions of Europe* was adopted. The above resolutions contain tasks for all sectors concerned and the due dates for their fulfilment. The tasks aim at solving the problems in the Slovak part of the World Heritage property and the fulfilment of commitments of the Slovak Republic arising out of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage in the next period.

A cross-sector working group the task of which is to prepare an expert proposal for modification of the boundaries of the Slovak component parts of the World Heritage property including their buffer zones in compliance with the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and IUCN was formed. The working group comprises the representatives of concerned ministries (the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, ME SR, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic), the plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the least developed districts as well as the representatives of state-owned entities managing the forest lands that are the part of the UNESCO World Heritage property (Forests of the Slovak Republic, state-owned enterprise, Forestry and Agricultural Property, Ulič, state-owned enterprise, Military Forests and Estates of the Slovak Republic, state-owned enterprise), State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic and non-governmental organizations Civil Society Prales and Aevis Foundation. The working group has met four times on 14, 22 and 29 November 2017 and the last time on 15 December 2017.

The bulk of land within the Slovak components of the UNESCO site and their buffer zones is managed by state entities, and a proposal to specify the borders was therefore discussed in detail within the above-mentioned expert working group. The meetings were also attended by a representative(s) of non-state forest owners, with whom also separate negotiations were carried out. ME SR within the scope of its competences took steps to tackle persisting challenges.

In order to legally ensure a non-intervention regime on the whole territory of Slovak components, SNC SR developed the conservation projects for three designated nature reserves Čerňa (Černiny), Pramenisko Cirochy (both part of the Stuzica – Bukovské vrchy component) and Nežabec (part of the Vihorlat component).

The designation of these nature reserves will increase the level of nature protection from the current 3rd and 2nd level to the highest 5th level of protection on the lands beyond the existing ones (definition of levels of protection pursuant to Act No. 543/2002 Coll. is in Annex 3).

SNC SR was appointed to organize the meetings with the relevant non-state owners. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the conservation projects aimed at designation of proposed nature reserves and to discuss eventual compensations for the restriction of common management under Art. 61 of Act No. 543/2002 Coll. The Working Meetings were held on 20-21 July 2017, 31 July 2017, 16 October 2017 and 16 January 2018. Currently, three non-state entities do not agree with the designation of two proposed nature reserves Čerňa and Pramenisko Cirochy (the component of Stužica – Bukovské vrchy). The interest of ME SR is to find solutions through constructive negotiations. ME SR fully respects the rights of the owners and therefore it is not our goal to repeat past mistakes, but to offer the owners adequate compensation. In case negotiations would not lead to any effective results, ME SR will examine all legal possibilities to ensure the protection of the outstanding universal value of the property and will seek alternative solutions.

Due to the different interests of parties concerned and the need to tackle the remaining expert issues and compensations for the restriction of common management further negotiations are expected. ME SR is closely cooperating with other stakeholders in implementation of the World Heritage Committee's and the monitoring mission UNESCO/IUCN recommendations in order to ensure non-intervention regime in the whole Slovak part of World Heritage property.

Today as regards the component Stužica – Bukovské vrchy this non-intervention regime is ensured in the territory of three national nature reserves (NNR) (Jarabá skala, Pľaša, Stužica) and three nature reserves (NR) (Borsukov vrch, Šípková a Udava). As regards the component Vihorlat a non-intervention regime is ensured in the territory of two NNR (Morské oko, Motrogon), two NR (Jedlinka, Baba pod Vihorlatom) and two natural sights (Sninský kameň, Malé Morské oko). The Management plan of Poloniny National Park for 2017 - 2026 adopted by the Resolution of the Slovak Government No. 293 of 7 July 2016² concerning three out of four Slovak components of World Heritage property should also be mentioned. Within the framework of this program an ecologically functional area 1B (EFP1B) comprising forest growth beyond existing reserves owned or used by non-state entities that are the part of Stužica – Bukovské vrchy component was designated. A non-intervention management is to be observed in EFP1B and due to the voluntary commitment of non-state forest users it continues to be observed. Pursuant to Act No. 543/2002 Coll. all the decisions on granting authorisation for activities or plans and other documentation under specific provisions that may have an impact on the protected area shall comply with the measures adopted in the Management plan of Poloniny National Park.

It is important to highlight the fact that suspension of logging in the Slovak components and sustainable forest management in their buffer zones were endorsed by adoption of the above mentioned Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic of 15 November 2017 (Annex 2).

4. The Committee notes with concern that no Integrated Management Plan (IMP) has been established for the Slovak components of the property; reiterates its request to the State Party of Slovakia to ensure that no logging operations take place within the property's boundaries until this issue is resolved through the development, in consultation with the other States Parties for this property, of an IMP for the Slovak components of the property, focused on nature conservation and taking into account all international designations, such as World Heritage property, Biosphere Reserve, European Diploma and Natura 2000 and urges the State Party to ensure that no logging will be possible within the property's boundaries after the adoption of the plan.

² Detailed information about the Management plan of Poloniny National Park for 2017 - 2026 including its English translation can be found in the previous report on the state of property conservation available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/document/155521>

Progress in 2017:

- preparation of Integrated Management Plan (IMP) as one of the tasks approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic
- development of project to prepare IMP together with experts from UNESCO/IUCN

The most important task is to complete works regarding the better delineation of the property and its buffer zone. Subsequently *an Integrated Management Plan*, containing the targeted measures for the respective surface areas incorporated in the property and buffer zone will be prepared. Integrated management plan will also consider other commitments arising out of international awards related to this territory such as the World Heritage property, biosphere reserve, Natura 2000 site and European diploma. Currently, SNC SR is developing the project co-financed by the Operational Programme Quality of Environment. The project aims at the preparation of IMP for the Slovak part of World Heritage property. An integrated management plan shall mostly focus on property conservation (in relation to the current state and requested conservation status), overall property management (in terms of management measures and management authorities and administration) taking into account sectoral strategies (research, education, communication, tourism, etc.).

The proposal for buffer zone management was prepared by a limited expert group within the framework of cross-sector working group for better boundary delineation activity. A limited expert group was comprised of the representatives of SNC SR, Forests of the Slovak Republic, state-owned enterprise, National Forest Centre and Civil Society Prales. Currently, the parties concerned comment on the proposal of buffer zones management.

In 2017 the project *Nature conservation as an opportunity for regional development*³ aimed at the transboundary cooperation with Ukraine and financed by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism Programme was successfully completed. Also the project *Development of nature conservation and of protected areas in the Slovak Carpathians* financed by the Swiss Financial Mechanism Programme was successfully completed⁴. Both projects are mentioned in the previous report.

The management of three Slovak components located in the Poloniny National Park is addressed in the Management plan of the Poloniny National Park for 2017 / 2026 approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 293 of 7 July 2016.

5. The Committee takes note that negotiations regarding possible boundary modifications of the Slovak components of the property are planned to be completed in 2017, and also urges the State Party of Slovakia to submit a proposal for such boundary modifications as soon as possible, after consultation with the other States Parties for this property.

Progress in 2017:

- adding to the discussions also intensive expert discussions regarding the modification of the boundaries of the Slovak components
- preparation of an expert proposal for modification of the boundaries based on the work of expert group
- consultation of the process with the representatives of the World Heritage Centre at the Working Meeting

In 2017 intensive expert discussions aimed at achieving the final agreement with the respective owners, keepers and users of lands concerned were under way. For this purpose, an expert group responsible for modification of boundaries of the Slovak components and its buffer zones was established (refer also to chapter

³ <http://www.sopshr.sk/norsky-projekt/>

⁴ http://www.sopshr.sk/svajciarsky-web/?page_id=4&lang=sk

3, paragraph 3). The primary objective is to assure an adequate protection of the Slovak components and their buffer zones and to assure conservation of the territory in terms of conservation and improvement of the Slovak part of the World Heritage property, closely cooperating with other sectors namely the agricultural sector and defence sector as well as with the owners themselves.

The modification of boundaries was discussed also with the Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre Mechtild Rössler and UNESCO / IUCN experts at the Working Meeting held on 7 December 2017. The Slovak delegation representing the relevant stakeholders - environmental and agricultural sector, non-state forest owners and non-governmental sector presented at the meeting the actual state and the progress achieved in boundary modification and they also used an opportunity to consult with UNESCO experts to the constructive discussion in relation to the several persistent challenges and further way forward in order to fulfil recommendations of 41st World Heritage Committee session in Krakow. Based on the conclusions of this Working meeting the Slovak Republic makes continuous efforts to achieve final delineation of the boundaries of the Slovak part of World Heritage property while closely cooperating with the World Heritage Centre and international organization IUCN experts. The consultations with experts during their planned visit to the Slovak part of World Heritage property and organization of expert consultations on the ground (May 2018) are the part of cooperation.

6. The Committee also welcomes the State Party's progress made in implementing the recommendations of the 2014 Reactive Monitoring mission and requests the State Party to continue its efforts to complete the implementation of all mission recommendations.

The report of reactive monitoring mission by UNESCO/IUCN prepared by Dr. Galland contained the following recommendations to which we respond as follows:

R1: In consultation with the States Parties of Germany and Ukraine who share responsibility for this serial transnational property, undertake a thorough scientific assessment of the conservation value of the Slovak components of the inscribed property and their buffer zones; and proceed with a proposal for a significant boundary modification in order to strengthen Outstanding Universal Value in line with the relevant provisions of the Operational Guidelines and consistent with the design of the whole transnational property. The proposal should take into account the property and user rights, and should include recalculated surfaces on the basis of accurate GIS maps.

We mentioned in the report submitted in December 2015⁵ that within the framework of the above Swiss project the National Forest Centre mapped more than 7.000 ha of forest biotopes in the territory of the Poloniny National Park and Protected Landscape Area Vihorlat Mountains in 2014 under methodical guidelines for designation of natural forests in order to identify the forest state and to identify the presence of primeval and natural forests in the World Heritage property. This mapping as well as the knowledge from other researches conducted in the Poloniny National Park is a background for the preparation of a proposal for more accurate delineation (change). Beside the existing nature reserves, the proposal for boundary modification should include also a nature reserve Borsukov vrch established in 2016 while considering ecologically functional area 1B defined in the Management plan of the Poloniny National Park. The ownership relationships and rights were also considered. The geographic information system (GIS) and accurate map backgrounds - GIS layers provided by the authorized institutions in Slovakia (Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre Authority of the Slovak Republic, National Forest Centre, Military Forests and Estates of the Slovak Republic, state-owned enterprise) are being used in new designation of this component meaning that the procedure complies with the recommendation. Similarly the proposal for more accurate delineation of the boundaries of Vihorlat component is being prepared.

⁵ <http://whc.unesco.org/document/135186>

With regard to the components of Havešová and Rožok the discussions were not necessary for their designation, only the boundaries would be delineated more accurately by GIS.

As discussed in chapter 3, paragraph 3, further negotiations are needed to definitively specify the boundaries of Stuzica - Bukovské vrchy and Vihorlat components. The interest of the MoE SR is to conclude these negotiations in the shortest possible time in close cooperating with relevant UNESCO and IUCN experts.

R2: In consultation with the States Parties of Germany and Ukraine and consistent with the management provisions for the entire property, prepare an Integrated Management Plan for the Slovak components of the property, focused on nature conservation and taking into account all international designations, such as World Heritage Property, Biosphere Reserve and European Diploma. This Plan should as one specific objective, ensure that all current and future commercial activities in and around the WH property are regulated/adapted in order to be fully compatible with the conservation objectives of these areas, and the protection of OUV.

Detailed information to this recommendation are described in paragraph 4 of the Decision 41 COM 7B.4.

R3: Establish an effective institutional dialogue at national level among all the concerned Ministries, in particular the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in order to ensure that national priority tasks and commercial activities are fully compatible with the conservation objectives of the property.

Detailed information to this recommendation are described in paragraph 3 of the Decision 41 COM 7B.4.

R4: Start a comprehensive information and outreach campaign at national and local levels focused on communicating the World Heritage status of the area, and fully integrate the local actors in all steps of the management and boundary modification process.

An information and educational workshop **took place on 8 November 2017 in Snina**. The Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic, organized it through its Tourism Section. The workshop was aimed at a wide range of interest groups and the representatives of the local government (city of Snina, mayors of Ulič valley villages), state government, SNC SR, entrepreneurs in the field of tourism from the districts of Snina and Medzilaborce attended it. The participants of the workshop received information about tourism legislation (funding activities in tourism and investment aid), organizations operating in the tourism industry and possible cooperation and education. The Regional Tourism Organization North-east of Slovakia (KOCR) presented its successful activities. The specific agenda item was dedicated to the World Heritage property as an important tourist and cycle tourist region brand that may attract visitors. A possible increase in the numbers of visitors from the neighbouring Poland using the cycling route through Ruské sedlo situated on the border between Slovakia and Poland was discussed.

A series of workshops **on the topic of "Development of nature conservation and sustainable tourism in the UNESCO World Heritage property of the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of Carpathians and other regions of Europe was organized on 22 - 24 November 2017"**. Workshops took place in the various locations (villages of Runina, Ulič, Nová Sedlica, Zemplínske Hámre, Lodomírov, Osadné, Stakčín, recreation sites Morské oko, Sninské rybníky) to attract as much visitors and regional stakeholders as possible. Two UNESCO experts - Peter Debrine and James Rebanks were invited to attend these workshops and they gave the workshop attendants the valuable information and experience aimed at the support of development of tourism in the region of the Slovak part of the World Heritage property. The outcomes of workshops were presented and discussed at the meeting with the representatives of UNESCO World Heritage Centre on 7 December 2017 in Paris (information about the meeting is given in paragraph 5 of the Decision 41 COM 7B.4).

The topic of workshops was similar to the topic of the international UNESCO conference *Benefits Beyond Inscription: Leveraging the UNESCO Brand for Sustainable Tourism Development in Central European Regions*, held under the auspices of UNESCO 5 May 2017 in the Bardejov spa. ME SR co-organized the conference. This conference was the flagship event of the World Heritage Centre and it was held on the occasion of year 2017 branded as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism. Its goal was to acknowledge an enhanced cooperation between the Slovak Republic and UNESCO and to reflect the value of the world heritage and UNESCO brand for the benefit of regions and local people.

Involvement of stakeholders took place also within the process of modification of boundaries of the Slovak part of World Heritage property - the representative of non-state forest owners participated at the third session of the Working Group for modification of the boundaries of the Slovak components and their buffer zones and also at the above Working Meeting in Paris.

The need to increase awareness about the importance of the world natural heritage and to support formal and informal environmental training and education was also discussed in the above document *the Comprehensive package of measures for UNESCO World Heritage property of the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and other Regions of Europe* adopted by the Resolution No. 528 of 15 November 2017 (Annex 2) of the Slovak Government. This Resolution also contains the tasks for the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. In order to fulfil these tasks the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic adopted measures for accreditation of continuous environmental educational programs, it appointed the evaluators of these programs who are the members of Accreditation Commission of the the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic for continuous education of pedagogical and expert staff. The preparation of further accredited environmental training programs is under way. In order to provide support to environmental training and education the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic plans to launch the call for Environmental project proposals 2018 aimed at the natural and cultural heritage of Slovakia and expected funding amounting to EUR 50,000.

R5: Undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment on the planned and potential sustainable development of the region surrounding the World Heritage property, in order to define how added value may be secured from the World Heritage and other international designations, and to explore alternative sources of income and benefits for local people.

Two Resolutions approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic in 2017 together with background documents (detailed information are given in paragraph 3) aimed at the comprehensive evaluation of the current state of the Slovak components of the World Heritage property and the proposal of measures to ensure property protection and conservation and the use of UNESCO brand as a part of sustainable development of the region Therefore the Transport and Construction Sector responsible for tourism agenda and the plenipotentiary of the Government for the least developed districts are represented in the cross-sector working group for the World Heritage property.

The Resolution of the Slovak Government approved on 15 November 2017, namely paragraphs B.9 – B.12 and B.15 – B.19 (Annex 2) reflects the need of comprehensive approach in order to address this issue and to use UNESCO brand potential for economic diversification of the region. Pursuant to the resolution the proposal of measures to use the added value of the World Heritage brand in order to support sustainable tourism was prepared. The Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic continues in the promotion of the World Natural Heritage at important international fairs in the field of tourism as well as at other foreign and domestic events and workshops. The UNESCO World Heritage will be considered also in several strategic documents for the development of the region that are being prepared in compliance with this resolution - action plans for the least developed districts and the National Regional Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic respectively. By virtue of its statutes the plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the least developed districts will oversee that the development proposals defined in IMP for the Slovak components of the World Heritage property or other documents used as a background for IMP are incorporated into the action plans of relevant districts.

The issue of the Slovak component sites of the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of Carpathians and other regions of Europe concerns mainly two least developed districts – Snina and Sobrance. In this context the district of the greatest importance is the district of Snina however it has not been officially kept as one of the least developed districts. It is expected that it will be included in the list of the least developed districts of the Slovak Republic during 2018 - in such case within 9 months from its inclusion the action plan shall be prepared. It is a binding document the goal of which is to eliminate lagging of this district and to allocate funds to the respective regional cooperation entities in the form of so-called regional financial contribution. The action plan for Snina district shall be based on the study supported within the grant call of the Regional Development Section of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic called, „*Development concept of sustainable development and economic utilization of the natural and cultural values of Snina region*“, that is currently under way. The analysis of potential use of the World Natural Heritage brand for the support of regional development and evaluation of alternative sources of income for the local people such as ecotourism and ecological agriculture shall be the part of the study.

R6: Establish a joint national scientific advisory committee in Slovakia for the World Heritage property, the whole Poloniny National Park (European Diploma) and the Slovak part of the East Carpathian Biosphere Reserve.

Such institute has not been established yet as the expert issues were addresses at the above meetings and within the framework of projects. The establishment of institute shall be discussed at the next discussions at the national level. In the case it is established this institute shall beside the territory of Poloniny National Park deal with other territories as mentioned in the recommendation. However if it is supposed to deal with the whole Slovak World Heritage property, such scientific council will have to deal also with the Protected Landscape Area Vihorlat Mountains.

7. The Committee considers that, unless urgent measures are taken to address the lack of an adequate protection regime of the Slovak components of the property and to ensure that their boundary delineation is adequate, their protection from logging and other potential threats cannot be guaranteed in the long-term, which would clearly constitute a potential danger to the OUV of this serial transnational property as a whole, in line with Paragraphs 137 and 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*.

According to the conclusions of the above cross-sector working group meeting and subsequently of the Resolution of the Slovak Government No. 528 of 15 November 2017 in the meantime no logging takes place in the Slovak part of World Heritage property as referred to in paragraph 4 of the decision 41 COM 7B.4.

8. The Committee also requests the State Party of Slovakia, in consultation with the other States Parties for this property, to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2018, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 42nd session in 2018.

With reference to Decision of the World Heritage Committee No. 41 COM 7B.4 adopted in July 2017 at 41st session in Krakow the Slovak Republic submits the report on the state conservation of the property by 1 February 2018 according to the instructions of the World Heritage Centre resulting from the decision.

The actual version of the report on the property state is based on the information and background documents that are available to the Slovak Republic at the national level and information provided by the partner countries.

The report was sent to all partner countries for information.

4. OTHER CURRENT CONSERVATION ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE STATE(S) PARTY(IES) WHICH MAY HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PROPERTY'S OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

None serious conditions in the territory of the Slovak part of World Heritage property concerning its protection that might damage its integrity and have a negative impact on its exceptional world value were identified.

5. POTENTIAL MAJOR RESTORATIONS, ALTERATIONS AND/OR NEW CONSTRUCTION(S) INTENDED WITHIN THE PROPERTY, THE BUFFER ZONE(S) AND/OR CORRIDORS OR OTHER AREAS, WHERE SUCH DEVELOPMENTS MAY AFFECT THE OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE OF THE PROPERTY, INCLUDING AUTHENTICITY AND INTEGRITY

The Government of the Slovak Republic by its Resolution 568 of 12 November 2014 (Annex 4) supported the development of Eastern Slovakia region, development of activities aimed at the promotion of employment beside economic sectors also in the sectors using natural valuables of the region for the development of soft tourism including the restoration of access road to the Poloniny National Park the part of which is also the section of historical road called Porta Rusica (Annex 5) in the 6 km section Ruské – Ruské sedlo. This section of historic road built in 19th century crosses also the component of Stuzica – Bukovské vrchy of the World Heritage property. The restoration works carried out only in the road body and the following traffic with assumed low frequency shall not have a negative impact on the World Heritage property.

In 2017 Forestry and Agricultural Property, Ulič, state-owned enterprise developed a project documentation for restoration of the whole road to apply for funding through the structural funds. The restoration should take place in the next years in three stages. The Forestry and Agricultural Property, Ulič, state-owned enterprise is currently considering only the first stage of restoration from the former village of Ruské to Ruské sedlo. The date of restoration has not been set yet as the enterprise is still in search of adequate funds. It will start when they are available, after consultation with the World Heritage Centre/IUCN.

In January 2018 the village of Zboj submitted to the District Office in Prešov and SNC SR a request to issue a legally binding opinion for the purpose of decision on the construction location *The cultural heritage of nations – Zboj SK/Cisna PL*. The construction of an observation tower Ďurkovec and the access road leading to it that is to be located directly in the territory of the component Stuzica – Bukovské vrchy, specifically in NNR Jarabá skala is the part of this construction project.

6. PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT

The Slovak Republic agrees to file the report in the information system of world cultural heritage preservation (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>) to be available to the public

7. SIGNATURE OF THE AUTHORITY

Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic
Námestie Ľ. Štúra 1
812 35 Bratislava 1
Slovak Republic

In Bratislava, 31 January 2018

ANNEXES

1. Chapter 3, paragraph 3: Resolution of the Government No. 382 of 16 August 2017
2. Chapter 3, paragraph 3: Resolution of the Government No. 528 of 15 November 2017
3. Chapter 3, paragraph 3: Definition of levels of protection pursuant to Act No. 543/2002 Coll.
4. Chapter 5: Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 568 of 12 November 2014
5. Chapter 5: Proposal for the restoration of historical road Porta Rusica