



IUCN  
Rue Mauverney 28  
1196 Gland  
Switzerland

Tel. +41 22 999 0000  
Fax +41 22 999 0002  
www.iucn.org

H. E. Mr Rapulane Sydney Molekane  
Ambassador Extraordinary and plenipotentiary of South  
Africa in France, Permanent Delegate  
Permanent Delegation of the Republic of South Africa to  
UNESCO  
Ambassade de l'Afrique du Sud  
59, Quai d'Orsay  
75343 Paris Cedex 07

20 December 2017

## **IUCN Evaluation of Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains – Nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List**

### **Progress report on IUCN evaluation and request for supplementary information**

Dear Ambassador,

Further to the above nomination to the World Heritage List, I am writing with information on progress with the IUCN evaluation. As noted in previous correspondence, IUCN seeks to develop and maintain a dialogue with States Parties during the evaluation process of all nominations. As per the Operational Guidelines (paragraph 149 and Annex 6 - *Evaluation procedures of the Advisory Bodies for nomination*), this letter also provides the short interim report outlining the status and any issues relevant to evaluations, which is requested to be sent by IUCN before 31 January 2018.

The IUCN World Heritage technical evaluation mission to Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains was undertaken by Mr Guy Narbonne from 1-7 September 2017. The evaluator greatly appreciated the excellent support and co-operation provided by your colleagues in the preparation and implementation of the mission, and the kind welcome of the State Party throughout the mission. Please convey our sincere thanks to all of the officials, scientists and contributors that assisted the mission.

The IUCN World Heritage Panel is in the course of examining World Heritage nominations for natural and mixed properties, and cultural landscapes. This process will conclude in March/April 2018, following which the IUCN evaluation report will be issued to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. At its first meeting held in the week of 4 December 2017, the IUCN Panel examined in detail each nomination dossier, reports and desktop reviews of field evaluators and external reviewers, as well as other references regarding the nominated properties.

The Panel greatly appreciated the efforts that have been made in relation to this nomination, and will be discussing the nomination again at the second meeting of the IUCN World Heritage Panel, to be held in March 2018. At this stage, the Panel noted a number of points where additional information is required, and we would be grateful for the State Party's response on the following points:

1/ **Global Comparative Analysis.** IUCN noted the additional comparative analysis information submitted following the IUCN field mission (Addendum to section 3.2 submitted via email to IUCN on 10 October 2017), and considers that this elaboration should be extended and submitted officially as part of the dossier. The authors of this additional comparative analysis are however not clear nor is the level of peer review that has taken place in relation to this document. We would therefore request further review and integration of this new addendum with the existing comparative analysis provided within the nomination, to provide a consolidated statement of the comparative values of the nominated property relative to other sites globally (such as Pilbara in Australia). Please could the authorship and reviewer information for the study be made fully clear in the submission.

2/ **Legal protection.** According to the nomination dossier an inventory has been completed for all of the geosites that lie outside of the designated nature reserves and thus have no protection. It is also understood that these geosites are currently undergoing evaluation for individual legal protection, and the intention is to include them all under legal protection. Please provide additional information on the proposals for legal protection for these geosites, the current status and anticipated timeframes for completing the legal protection of all geosites located within the nominated area. We would be grateful to understand in detail how the designation process for these remaining geosites will take place, and if there is any risk that this protection would not be put in place before inscription on the World Heritage List. The IUCN Panel wishes to be assured that adequate protection will be put in place independently of whether the site becomes a World Heritage property.

3/ **Mining.** We understand that two companies lawfully hold mining rights adjacent to the northern edge of the nominated property and that there is active mining at a depth of approximately 1 km below the surface immediately to the north of the Property. The rights of these companies to legally extract minerals from and to explore for new mineral resources in areas outside protected areas is not disputed. However, the IUCN Panel would like more information on the scale and potential for mining interest within this mineral rich region including the clarification on the possibility of underground mines extending into, or underneath those parts of the nominated property which fall outside of legally protected areas.

4/ **Buffer zones.** Concerns regarding wider threats are exacerbated by the fact that there is no buffer zone prescribed in the nomination. IUCN would therefore wish to understand whether the State Party sees any means by which a buffer zone could assist in the protection of the property in the future.

5/ **Relocation of people.** IUCN notes that the nomination refers to relocation of people taking place in the region of the nomination "to provide secure tenure for a number of families" (page 37 of the nomination dossier). Please provide full details on relocation processes that are underway or planned concerning people living within the nominated area and why this is considered necessary. Please include full details of how consent from the affected people regarding relocation has been addressed.

6/ **Threats.** Please provide additional assurances on how increasing tourism will be managed should the property be inscribed as a World Heritage property, in particular through the management plan for the nominated property and the geosites, in order to fully protect the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. IUCN notes the concerning references to major uncontrolled collecting from the komatiite outcrops outside the current protected areas to a level that threatens their long-term existence.

7/ **Private landowners.** Please confirm that all private landowners within the nominated property are supportive of the nomination and provide verifiable evidence of this support.

8/ **Transboundary collaboration.** The Barberton Greenstone Belt covers an area of about 120 km long and 30 km wide. 40% of the belt is within the nominated property, but in the east the formation crosses the international border into Swaziland. Please advise on the extent and status of any transboundary collaboration in place with Swaziland regarding protection and conservation of geosites, and on the comparison of values between the Barberton Greenstone Belt in South Africa, and the exposures in Swaziland. Please advise if the State Parties have held any discussions regarding the potential for future transboundary extensions of the nominated property to include sites in Swaziland.

We would appreciate your response to the above points as soon as possible, in order to facilitate the evaluation process, but **no later than the 28 February 2018**, as per paragraph 148 of the Operational Guidelines. Please note that any information submitted after this date will not be considered by IUCN in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee. It should be noted, however, that while IUCN will carefully consider any supplementary information submitted, it cannot properly evaluate a completely revised nomination or large amounts of new information submitted at the last minute. So we request to keep your response concise and respond only to the above requests.

**Supplementary information should be submitted officially in three copies to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in order for it to be registered as part of the nomination.** An electronic copy of any supplementary information to both the UNESCO World Heritage Centre ([a.balsamo@unesco.org](mailto:a.balsamo@unesco.org)) and IUCN Headquarters ([christelle.perruchoud@iucn.org](mailto:christelle.perruchoud@iucn.org)) would also be helpful.

Taking into account your response, IUCN will formulate its final recommendation to the World Heritage Committee which will meet from 24 June to 4 July 2018 in Bahrain.

In the interest of ensuring full transparency and dialogue regarding the IUCN evaluation process, we are happy to respond to any questions you may wish to raise regarding IUCN's work on the World Heritage Convention, including the above points. I am traveling to Paris on a regular basis and could be available to meet if this would be helpful, or would be pleased to organise a meeting via skype or conference call as an alternative. I would also emphasise that both you or your representatives are also most welcome to visit IUCN's headquarters in Switzerland to meet in person if you wish, on this nomination, or on any other matter of interest.

Please do not hesitate to contact Ms Christelle Perruchoud, World Heritage Evaluations and Operations Officer (Tel: +41 22 999 0358; Fax: +41 22 999 0002; email: [christelle.perruchoud@iucn.org](mailto:christelle.perruchoud@iucn.org)) if you have any questions regarding this request, or if you would wish to arrange a meeting or phone call to discuss this request.

Please allow me to reiterate our thanks for your support of the World Heritage Convention and for the conduct of IUCN's recent mission. We look forward to your kind cooperation in furnishing responses to the abovementioned points.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Badman  
Director - World Heritage Programme

cc. South African National Commission for UNESCO, Mr Carlton Mukwevho, Secretary-General  
UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Mr Edmond Moukala and Mr Alessandro Balsamo  
IUCN Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa, Mr Luther Anukur, Regional Director