

State of Conservation Report
World Heritage Site "Golden Mountains of Altai"

**1. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee
41 COM 7B.5**

In 2017, economic activities threatening the preservation of the World Natural Heritage site "Golden Mountains of Altai" were not implemented.

The territory of the natural park "The Quiet Zone of Ukok", which causes concern of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, is also used as a territory of the traditional nature management of the indigenous small people. There is no harmful production here, due to the inaccessibility of the territory and the severe seasonal climate, tourists are rarely visited.

The Kalgutinskoye deposit of tungsten-molybdenum ores located on the territory of the Protected Area is not being developed. The environment (atmospheric air, soil cover, natural waters) is not subject to anthropogenesis.

The activities of the Nature Park "The Quiet Zone of Ukok" contribute to the conservation of flora and fauna, as well as to maintain the ecological balance of adjacent territories.

We confirm that the route of the proposed "Altai" gas pipeline has not yet been determined, and that no further construction work is being carried out.

In this regard, the cancellation of the Resolution of the Government of the Altai Republic dated August 2, 2012 № 202 is not advisable, because in order to improve the socio-economic development of indigenous people residing in the said territory and to conduct traditional nature management, the Government of the Altai Republic should have the opportunity of vital linear objects construction.

The Government of the Republic of Altai is interested in preserving unique natural sites, understands responsibility for preserving the natural heritage and acts both in the interests of the population of the Republic of Altai and Russia, and in the interests of the world community.

Regarding the cluster "Katunskiy Reserve"

In 2017 the Secretariat of the UNESCO-MAB Program officially approved the nomination of the Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (TBR) "Great Altai" including State Nature Biosphere Reserve "Katunskiy" in Russia and Katon-Karagaiskiy National Park in Kazakhstan. This TBR includes the WH property's cluster "Katunskiy Reserve and its buffer zone around Mt. Belukha". TBR is considered as an additional guarantee to (1) conserve biological and landscape diversity of the unique natural ecosystems of the transboundary zone of the Altai, to (2) contribute to sustainable development of vast

areas around it and to (3) improve livelihoods of local communities by supporting traditional land use practices and development of ecological tourism.

Within Katunskiy Reserve the state of biological and landscape diversity, as well as human pressures onto the environment, are being permanently monitored. The long-term project on research and monitoring of climate change impacts for high-altitudinal ecosystems was continued in 2017.

The activities on provision of additional sources of income for local communities living around the property as alternative to unsustainable land use practices (incl. poaching etc) were also continued. In the frameworks of the sustainable livelihoods program, run by Katunskiy Reserve, the mechanisms of civil society involvement into conservation activities were introduced.

Increased number of visitors to the property is followed by the relevant equipment of ecotrails, camping sites and visitor centers, with wide involvement of volunteers. At the same time, strict control of visitors and monitoring of the ecological impacts of the ecotourism are in place within Katunskiy Reserve, thus allowing to eliminate negative effects for natural environment and biodiversity.

The cultural heritage of the Altai, including intangible culture of native communities, is being conserved and popularized in the ethnic-ecological museum of Katunskiy Reserve.

2. Other current conservation issues identified by the State(s) Party(ies) which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value

Regarding the cluster "Katunskiy Reserve"

During reporting period, numerous activities on conservation and popularization of the OUV, study and monitoring of the main stresses for the property, as well as on involvement of civil society (including indigenous people) into practical WH conservation, were implemented.

Conservation of the OUV was provided by systematic patrolling of the territory (80 patrols in total) and its fire fighting management. Within Katunskiy Reserve, five fire fighting stations were sustained, and fire danger level was monitored using remotely sensed data. During patrolling of the reserve, 20 violations were found (all of them are related to unauthorized access to the territory).

Research and monitoring. The program of monitoring in Katunskiy Reserve and surroundings is designed to provide coupled data on state of biodiversity and major threats and stresses for it (e.g. human pressure, climate change). Methodologically it is based on the UNESCO-GLOCHAMOST Research Strategy, recommended for the UNESCO mountain Biosphere Reserves. In 2017, following monitoring activities were implemented:

1. *Hydrometeorological monitoring* using automatic weather stations located at different altitudes and field snow survey. These activities are being conducted under the special licence issued by the Russian Hydrometeorological Service.
2. *Monitoring the number of key species*, which shows the stable state of populations in 2017.
3. *Monitoring the state of natural ecosystems along ecotouristic trails*, providing the basis for management of visitors. Based on the results of this activity, it is defined that the recreation impacts the environment only at local level, and doesn't result in unacceptable changes. Results of this monitoring allowed to evaluate the optimal number of visitors as 2000 per year along all trails within Katunskiy Reserve.
4. *Glacier monitoring* is a long-term activity conducted jointly with the research institutions. Repeated survey of the Tomich glacier in 2017 indicated that the glaciers of the area continue to retreat, and the rate of its degradation increased significantly during last 5 years. Repeated photos of the glaciers and high-altitudinal landscapes of Katunskiy Reserve provided solid imagery for the unique photo-exhibition "Katunskiy Mountain Range: 120 years in the researcher's photocamera", clearly showing impacts of climate change onto high-altitudinal environments.
5. *Monitoring of alpine ecosystems* using international protocols of the GLORIA initiative indicated upward shift of the alpine plant species due to climate warming. Based on these data, the list of climate-threatened flora species was developed.
6. *Monitoring of the plant communities* in different habitats was established in 1999 and allows to assess not only natural fluctuations of plant associations, but also the rate of restoration of overgrazed pastures.
7. *Geochemical monitoring* is aimed at determination of transboundary air pollution and its traces in different environments. Monitoring data in 2017 are under processing currently. In addition, in 2017 the assessment of biota's reaction to potential air pollution was conducted using the data on stability of plant growth. The results of this investigation demonstrate the absence of the pollution, which could significantly disturb plant species within the reserve area.

Activities on popularization of the WH property were conducted all over the reporting period. Together with two UNESCO schools in the Republic of Altai, special children competitions, devoted to the WH property, were organized. A number of thematic lessons at schools in Gorno-Altai and Ust-Koksa district were given with participation of 500 students. The exhibition devoted to the WH property was renovated in the National Museum of the Republic of Altai. Two photo-exhibitions were organized by the staff of Katunskiy Reserve and attended by 550 visitors. Within the

cluster of the WH property, three thematic information boards were installed along the touristic trails and two info-stands were developed for the visitor-centers. The brochure "Protected Altai", demonstrating all clusters of the WH property, was designed and disseminated in the region. Also other types of printed information (leaflets, newspapers, etc), containing information about the WH convention and property, as well as regime of the Katunskiy Reserve, were produced and disseminated (totally, 5400 copies). A number of public lectures and presentations for people of the Altai Republic and other regions of the Russian Federation and other countries were organized, including those on the forums of the Russian Geographic Society (Moscow), International Youth Center "Artek" (Yalta), All-Russian Meeting of Children Eco-Clubs (Abakan), All-Russian Ecological Expedition of Teachers (Republic of Altai), Regional Ethnic-Cultural Festival "Springs of the Altai" (Ust-Koksa), National Museum of the Republic of Altai (Gorno-Altaysk), Katon-Karagaiskiy National Park (Eastern Kazakhstan), International Alliance of Protected Areas (Chengdu, China), University of Central Asia (Dushanbe, Tajikistan). Totally, not less then 2300 persons attended these public events. In the Republic of Altai regional information campaign, devoted to the protected areas and WH property, was organized and attended by 1300 local persons. In addition, three documentary movies and 6 TV spots were produced and went on Russian TV channels.

In 2017 Katunskiy Reserve was visited by 1705 persons. 2000 persons also visited the visitor-center of the reserve in Ust-Koksa town. Special volunteer camp was organized to involve youth into practical work on equipment of eco-trails within the WH cluster.

In total, not less then 12 000 persons were informed about the territory and OUV of the WH property by different means.

Involvement of stakeholders. In order to involve different stakeholders into management and daily activities on conservation and popularization of the WH OUV, Katunskiy Reserve established and supported following institutional formations:

- Science-technical Council, coordinating all activities within the territory of Katunskiy Reserve,
- Public Council, aimed at provision of public support to activities of the reserve,
- Joint Russian-Kazakhstani Commission on Transboundary Reserve "Altai", coordinating cooperation between Katunskiy Reserve and Katon-Karagaiskiy National Park.

Katunskiy Reserve is a co-founder of the NGO "Altai-Sayan Mountain Partnership", which runs the program of sustainable livelihoods of local communities in the villages, surrounding the WH property. In the frameworks of this program, in 2017 20 families received financial support to develop micro-enterprises in the field of

ecotourism. Moreover, 50 local people were trained as guides and received official certificates from the university.

Implementation of this program fosters increase and diversification of the income of local communities. It consequently results in decrease of the level of poaching and other unsustainable land uses and increase of social acceptance of protected areas. Results of sociological survey, conducted in 2017 in villages surrounding Katunskiy Reserve, indicate that 91% of local people support the reserve (comparing to 62% in 2012 during the evaluation mission of UNESCO-IUCN).

Also, Katunskiy Reserve initiated cooperation agreements with more than 30 partners representing different sectors – research institutions, environmental NGOs, educational organizations, business-companies and local communities. All of these partnerships targeted to support conservation, research and education activities of the reserve from different sectors of civil society. Special agreement is established with the administration of the Nature Park “Belukha”, also located within the same cluster of the WH property. Under this agreement, joint patrols were held within the nature park. Project on designing the buffer zone of Katunskiy Reserve in the Mt. Belukha massif is continuing. It is considered, that establishment of the reserve’s buffer zone will increase the effectiveness of the conservation efforts within this area as well as will allow to implement a number of recommendations of the 2012 evaluation mission, related to the management of the Nature Park “Belukha”.

Transboundary cooperation. In 2017 UNESCO-MAB officially designated Transboundary Biosphere Reserve “Great Altai” in the basis of Katunskiy Reserve and its surroundings in Russia and Katon-Karagaiskiy National Park in Kazakhstan. Its total area is 1.54 million ha. Joint Russian-Kazakhstani activities within this TBR include (but not limited to) organization of joint patrols within the transboundary zone, joint fire-fighting trainings for the rangers of protected areas, monitoring of the wild animal migration in the transboundary zone, organization of ecological and information campaigns (like thematic lessons at schools, photo-exhibits, etc.) in the Republic of Altai and Eastern Kazakhstan. For popularization of the natural and cultural heritage of the transboundary region, special magazine “Guardians of the Great Altai” was published. Meeting of the managerial body of the TBR – the Joint Commission – was organized in the Russian portion of the area. The joint plan for 2018 was elaborated and agreed during this event.

Also in 2017 Katunskiy Reserve initiated MoU between reserve’s authorities and Administration of Protected Areas of the Mongolian Altai. It will help to enhance Russian-Mongolian cooperation in the region, as it is recommended by the 2012 evaluation mission.

Implementation of the recommendations of the 2012 Evaluation Mission

According to the mission's report, management of Katunskiy Reserve is performed in line with requirements of the WH Convention. International experts didn't find out any significant weaknesses neither in the reserve's management not in conservation of its OUV. Following recommendations could be partly relevant to Katunskiy Reserve:

- Develop an overall strategy for sustainable tourism of the property, which could be the

basis to set the policy for sustainable tourism at the level of the Altai Republic (in recent years the strategy of ecotourism development in Katunskiy Reserve and TBR "Great Altai" was designed and approved in the frameworks of the management plan of the TBR by the decision of the Joint Commission);

- Further strengthen the transboundary cooperation with Mongolia and China based on

the experience with Kazakhstan (In 2017 Katunskiy Reserve initiated the MoU between reserve's authorities and Administration of Protected Areas of the Mongolian Altai. The potential joint activities could include conservation of biodiversity, joint researches and monitoring, ecological and information campaigns, development of joint ecotours. Implementation of the MoU and building friendly relationship will contribute to strengthening cooperation of Russia and Mongolia in the field of conservation of unique natural and cultural heritage on the Altai transboundary region. In 2017 both sides already implemented a number of joint activities, including international children competition devoted to the nature and biodiversity of transboundary region).

- Strengthen the cooperation with the civil society and in particular the indigenous communities, taking advantage of their knowledge relevant for the management of the

property (In the frameworks of this activity Katunskiy Reserve established a platform for involvement of local communities into conservation of the WH property in the form of the Public Council. Jointly with the NGO "Altai-Sayan Mountain Partnership" the program on development of ecotourism on the basis of local communities as an alternative to poaching was continued and provided financial support, trainings and promotion for local eco-microentrepreneurs).

3. No major changes are expected within the World Heritage site.

Abbreviations:

WH – World Heritage

OUV – Outstanding Universal Value

TBR – Transboundary Biosphere Reserv

