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World Heritage

42 COM

AMENDMENT

<u>Item of the Agenda</u>	<u>8B.</u>
<u>Draft Decision</u>	<u>42 COM 8B.13</u>
<u>Amendment submitted by the Delegation of</u>	<u>Spain</u>
<u>Date</u>	<u>June 28, 2018</u>

TEXT

Property	Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley: originary habitat of Mesoamerica
ID No.	1534 Rev
State Party	Mexico
Criteria proposed by State Party	(iv), (x)

See IUCN Additional Evaluation Book, May 2018, page 25.
See ICOMOS Additional Evaluation Book, May 2018, page 1.

Draft Decision: 42 COM 8B.13

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined* Documents WHC/18/42.COM/8B.Add, WHC/18/42.COM/INF.8B1.Add and WHC/18/42.COM/INF.8B2.Add,
2. *Recalling* Decision 41 COM 8B.9 adopted at its 41st session (Krakow, 2017);
3. *Inscribes* Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley: originary habitat of Mesoamerica, Mexico, on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria [\(iv\) and \(x\)](#);
4. *Adopts* the following Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

Brief synthesis

The Tehuacán-Cuicatlán: originary habitat of Mesoamerica is located in central-southern Mexico, at the southeast of the State of Puebla and north of the State of Oaxaca. The property is a serial site of some 145,255 ha composed of three components: Zapotitlán-Cuicatlán, San Juan Raya and Purrón. All these share the same buffer zone of some 344,932 ha. The entire property is located within the Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Biosphere Reserve. The property coincides with a global

biodiversity hotspot and lies within an arid or semiarid zone with one of the highest levels of biological diversity in North America, giving rise to human adaptations crucial to the emergence of Mesoamerica, one of the cradles of civilisation in the world.

Of the 36 plant communities, 15 different xeric shrublands are exclusive to the Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley. The valley includes representatives of a remarkable 70% of worldwide flora families and includes over 3,000 species of vascular plants of which 10% are endemic to the Valley. It is also a global centre of agrobiodiversity and diversification for numerous groups of plants, in which the cacti stand out, with 28 genera and 86 species of which 21 are endemic. Large “cacti-forests” shape some landscapes of the Valley making it one of the most unique areas in the world.

The property exhibits the impressively high levels of faunal diversity known in this region including very high levels of endemism among mammals, birds, amphibians and fish. It also hosts an unusually high number of threatened species with some 38 listed under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The property is one of the richest protected areas in Mexico in terms of terrestrial mammals (134 species registered, two of them endemic to the Valley). The TCV is part of the Balsas Region and Interior Oaxaca Endemic Bird Area (EBA). There are 353 bird species recorded, of which nine are endemic to Mexico. The property has eight known roosting areas of the threatened Green Macaw including a breeding colony.

[The vast biodiversity of the Valley, combined with the adverse conditions of a desert, gave rise to one of the largest](#)

and best documented cultural sequences in the Americas. The archaeological evidence reveals the long sequence of human adaptations that took place in the area for over 14,000 years. The Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley is an exceptional example of a long process of adaptations and ancient technological evolution that defined the cultural region known today as Mesoamerica.

The arid conditions of the Valley triggered innovation and creativity, originating two of the major technological advances of human history: 1) plant domestication, which in the Valley is one of the most ancient worldwide, dating back to 9500 to 7000 B.C., and 2) development of water management technologies resulting in a wide array of water management elements, such as canals, wells, terraces, aqueducts and dams which make it the most diversified ancient irrigation complex of the continent. Consequently water management technological features were the ruling guide for the civilisational process that was developed in the Valley throughout thousands of years. Furthermore, these technological advances had a multiplying effect and fostered the discovery of other innovations like salt industry and pottery, which were essential to the organisation and complexity of the first civilisations.

The Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley: originary habitat of Mesoamerica is an invaluable and irreplaceable heritage of humanity and of all living things.

Criterion (iv):

The technological ensemble of water management of the Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley, along with other archaeological

evidences such as the remains found in caves, plant domestication sites and agriculture, use of wild species, salt ponds and pottery, mark a stage of the utmost importance for the Mesoamerican region: the appearance and development of one of the oldest civilisations in the world. Located throughout the Valley, these technologies bear unique evidence of the constant adaptation of humans to the environment and reflect their innovative capacity to face the adverse environmental conditions in the area.

Criterion (x): The Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley demonstrates exceptional levels of biological diversity in an arid and semiarid zone in North America. A remarkable 70% of worldwide floral families are represented in the Valley, by at least one species, and the area is one of the main centres of diversification for the cacti family, which is highly threatened worldwide. A remarkable diversity of cacti exists within the property often in exceptional densities of up to 1,800 columnar cacti per hectare. The property exhibits particularly high diversity among other plant types, namely the agaves, yuccas, bromeliads, bursera and oaks. Worldwide, it hosts one of the highest animal biodiversity levels in a dryland, at least with regard to taxa such as amphibians, reptiles and birds. The property coincides with one of the most important protected areas worldwide for the conservation of threatened species encompassing over 10% of the global distribution range of four amphibian species, and is ranked as the one of the two most important protected areas in the world for the conservation of seven amphibian and three bird species. The biodiversity of this region has a long history of sustaining human development and today a third of the total diversity of the

Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley, some 1,000 species, are used by local people.

Integrity

The property is of sufficient overall size and contains the key representative habitats and plant communities of the floristic province Tehuacán-Cuicatlán and all the relevant cultural elements that convey its Outstanding Universal Value. The three components include relatively undisturbed areas of high conservation value and the 22 selected archaeological sites, and are embedded within a larger buffer zone all of which coincides with the Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Biosphere Reserve. Further protection is afforded by the biosphere reserve's larger transitional zone. The management systems in place address the various threats to the area and establish objectives, strategies and specific actions in coordination with key local, national and international stakeholders to address these threats including any adverse effects of development.

Authenticity

The proposed sites for the present nomination still maintain their original condition, with the obvious weathering effects of time over millennia, but without any major disturbance in their main attributes. Investigations by renowned national and international academics have been based mainly in carbon and sediment dating, as well as the study and dating of clay remains considered relevant to determine the time limits of the sites. Thanks to the investigation methods used, the sites are still unaltered and so the spiritual character inherent to each one of them and to the system of sites as a whole has been preserved.

Protection and management requirements

The property Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley: originary habitat of Mesoamerica has effective legal protection to ensure the maintenance of its Outstanding Universal Value. At the time of inscription the property has a recently updated Strategic Management Plan which aims to integrate the management of natural heritage with archaeological features through a series of interrelated objectives. The plan provides a description of natural and cultural assets within the framework of a mixed World Heritage property and prescribes additional measures for the conservation and management of intangible cultural heritage, such as linguistic diversity and communities_sustainable development.

The institutions in charge of implementing protective measures are the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP), the Federal Attorney General for Environmental Protection and the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH). For monitoring of biodiversity the National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity and the National Forestry Commission coordinate with CONANP. All these institutions work together with the Administration Office of the Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Biosphere Reserve. Ongoing efforts are needed to ensure full integration and institutional coordination across issues related to natural and cultural heritage in accordance with the respective mandates of CONANP and INAH. Both managing institutions are committed to actively working with local communities and efforts to strengthen these approaches are ongoing.

In comparison to other regions, current and potential threats are considered quite low, and the population density is low. Tourism use at time of inscription is relatively minimal, however, has the potential to rapidly grow. A Nature Tourism Strategy for the Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Biosphere Reserve (2018-2023) seeks to balance the protection of the property's Outstanding Universal Value with fostering responsible visitation that empowers local communities. Priority needs to be given to the adaptive implementation of this strategy based on monitoring the impacts.

5. *Requests the State Party to:*

a) Conduct a more systematic inventory of fauna and flora within the property and the wider biosphere reserve and Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley to guide opportunities for further extension of the property,

b) Continue to strengthen participatory governance arrangements which work with local communities in harnessing tangible benefits from the World Heritage property;

6. *Welcomes* the improved integration of natural aspects with archaeological features within the updated Strategic Management Plan for the Cultural Sites within the property which complements the actions set forth in the Management Programme of the Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Biosphere Reserve and encourages continued harmonization between natural and cultural heritage management;

7. *Also welcomes* the updated Nature Tourism Strategy for the Tehuacán-

Cuicatlán Biosphere Reserve (2018-2023) which seeks to balance the protection of the property's Outstanding Universal Value while fostering responsible visitation that empowers local communities and *also encourages* the State Party to implement the strategy including the envisaged infrastructure, long-term impact monitoring, and tourism-related capacity building for local communities;

8. *Encourages the State Party to:*

a) *Continue to undertake* further surveys, research and documentation of cultural heritage sites in the Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley, including in areas currently located outside the property boundaries, related to irrigation systems and settlements.

b) Complete the legal protection of the relevant cultural heritage resources to be recognized at highest levels appropriate, including the full recognition at national level of the sites presently proposed,

c) Further detail the envisaged implementation of management, research and monitoring activities for cultural heritage within the strategic management plan, integrating also conservation and maintenance as well as visitor management provisions.

d) Strengthen the overall human and financial resources for management of cultural assets within the Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley.