

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State party

Albania

State region

Korça Prefecture, Pogradec Municipality

Name of property

Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region (extension to the existing Natural and cultural World Heritage Site “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region” (99ter)

Geographical coordinates to the nearest second

The geographical coordinates to the nearest second are in Table 1.

Id n°	Name of the component part	Region(s) / District(s)	Coordinates of the Central Point	Area of Nominated component of the Property (ha)	Area of the Buffer Zone (ha)	Map N°
001	Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region, property inscribed in 1979	FYR Macedonia	41° 11' 27" N 20° 77' 41" E	83,350	N/A	Annex 14
002	Proposed extension	Albania	40° 90' 96" N 20° 66' 28" E	11,378.60	15,944.40	Annex 14
Total area (in hectares)				94,728.6 ha	15,944.40 ha	

Table 1. Coordinates of the centre points of the component parts of the inscribed and proposed extension.

Textual description of the boundaries of the proposed extension

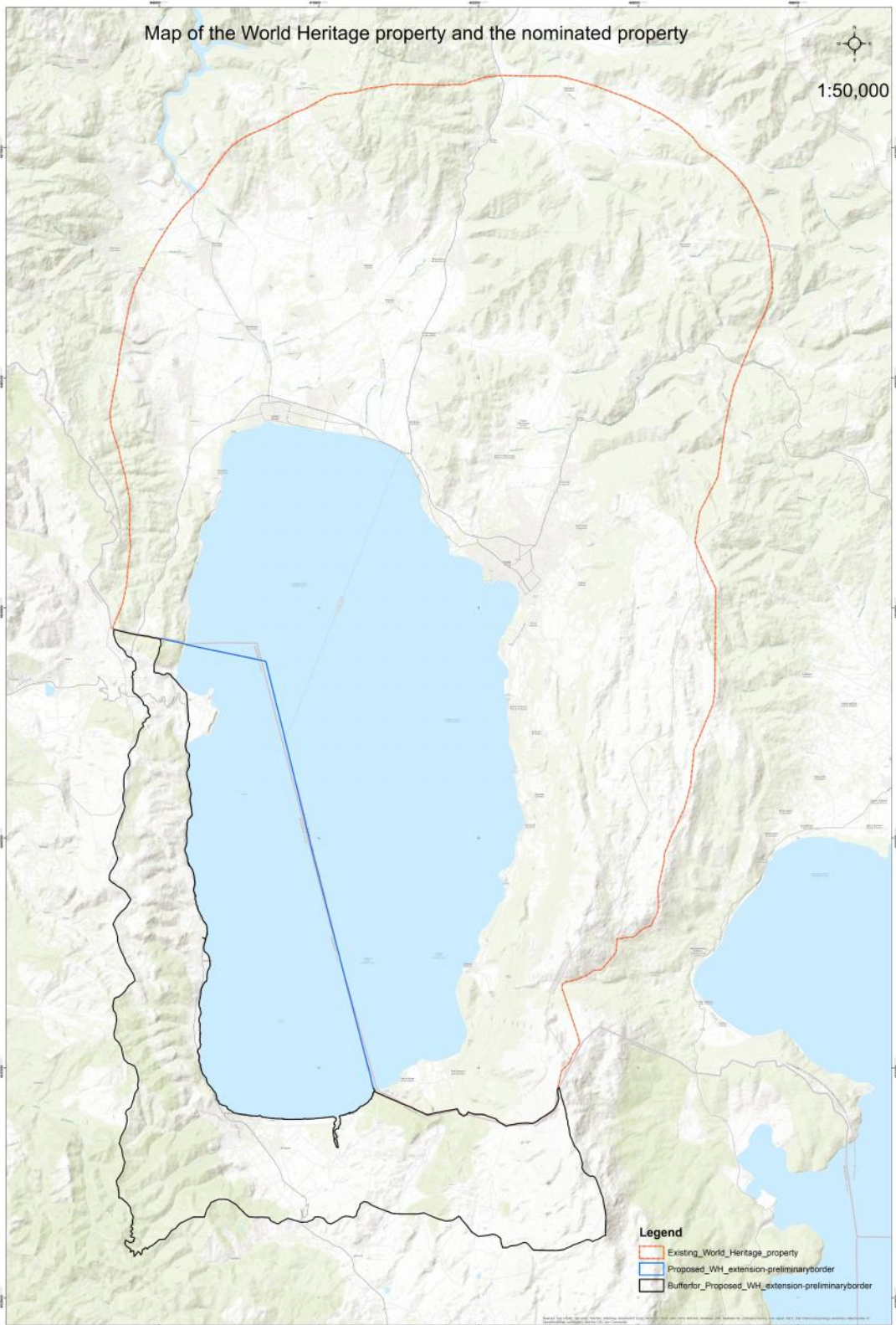
The proposed extension encompasses basically the Albanian part of Lake Ohrid region including the Lin Peninsula and coastal strip north to the Macedonian border and the Drilon springs and the watercourses linking them to the World Heritage Property “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region” in FYR Macedonia. (Table 1). The proposed extension is located entirely within Pogradec Municipality, Korça Prefecture with an area of 11,378.6 ha (Figure S1; Figures 1.1; 1.2; 1.3 and 1.4).

The proposal for inscription is an extension of the “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region” in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, inscribed in the World Heritage List in 1979 initially as a natural property, under natural criterion (iii), today criterion (vii). In 1980 the site was extended under cultural criteria (iii) and (iv), and became a mixed property.

In 2009, at its 33rd session, the World Heritage Committee approved a minor boundary modification that slightly reduced the boundaries of the property to the north and to the west. Within this process, the creation of a buffer zone was encouraged by the Committee. On this occasion, the Committee also recommended that “a trans-boundary extension of the property to include the Albanian part of Lake Ohrid and its watershed be considered in order to strengthen the value and integrity of the property.” The State party of Albania proposed the pilot project “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region” in the framework of the Upstream Process in support of World Heritage nominations, established on an experimental basis following Decisions of the World Heritage Committee (particularly 34 COM 12 and 35 COM 12). The implementation of the Pilot Upstream project is supported financially by the European Union through the IPA programme within the project “Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid Region” via an agreement between EU and UNESCO. The proposed extension area in the Albanian part of Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region covers an area of 11.378.6 ha.

The proposed extension property is part of the Albanian national protected area ‘Pogradec Terrestrial/Aquatic Protected Landscape’, established in 1999, with an area of 27,323 ha and administered by the National Agency for Protected Areas. The remaining area of the Pogradec Protected Landscape serves as the Buffer Zone for the proposed core area of the extension.

The Law no. 8906, dated 6.6.2002 “On protected area” as amended, distinguishes six different categories of protected areas in Albania, corresponding to those of IUCN. Accordingly the Pogradec Terrestrial/Aquatic Territory Protected Landscape Area is protected under the fifth category and covers an area of 27,232 ha (The decision of Council of Ministers No. 80, date 18.02.1999).The lake itself is part of the core zone due to importance as breeding areas for fishes and other important biodiversity components. A terrestrial core zone is proposed in the higher part of the Mali i Thatë above 1450 m of altitude and it create a bio-corridor with two other protected areas Galicica National Park and Prespa National Park. The proposed extension property includes state designated cultural monuments, traditional rural landscape and archaeological findings, the latest attesting to the early human occupation in the area, at least from the Neolithic Age. The Law no. 9048, date 07.04.2003 “On Cultural Heritage”, as amended and related bylaws sets out the framework concerning the proclamation and preservation of the Albanian cultural heritage, which is composed of tangible and intangible assets and values.



MAP 1. Map of the World Heritage property and the proposed extension

Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region

(Extension to the existing Mixed World Heritage Property “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region” (99ter)



MAP 2. Map of the World Heritage property and the proposed extension

Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region

(Extension to the existing Mixed World Heritage Property “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region” (99ter)

The World Heritage Supplement to the Management Plan for Pogradec Protected Landscape 2017-2027 is also integrated with the General Local Plan for Pogradec Municipality, which are the key management and planning instruments for the area, and the management plan for the world heritage property “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region”. The World Heritage Supplement fully applies to the proposed extension. The ownership of the lands in the protected area is divided among: state, local government and private. The state and private owns around 60% of total protected area surface including water bodies and small parts of forests and pastures. The agriculture land (16.6%) is private owned as it is for industrial/economic areas (3%), while the 40% of the area (forests and pastures) is under the ownership of local self government unites. Cultural heritage assets are state and private owned properties. The vision for the proposed extension within its World Heritage Supplement to the Management Plan for Pogradec Protected Landscape 2017-2027 states: Lake Ohrid region with its unique and inspiring landscape where the natural and cultural values are naturally intertwines with traditional ways of living, constitutes a sustainable tourist destination, an archive of nature history, a source of pride for the regional and national identity.

Criteria under which the property is nominated

Criterion (i): represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;

The town of Ohrid is one of the oldest human settlements in Europe. As one of the best preserved complete ensembles encompassing archaeological remains from the Bronze Age up to the Middle Ages, Ohrid boasts exemplary religious architecture dating from the 7th to 19th centuries as well as an urban structure showcasing vernacular architecture from the 18th and 19th centuries. All of them possess real historic, architectural, cultural and artistic values. The concentration of the archaeological remains and urban structures within the old urban centre of Ohrid, along the coast of Lake Ohrid as well as the surrounding area creates an exceptional harmonious ensemble, which is one of the key features that make this region truly unique. Within the proposed extension of the property there are several archaeological remains of lakeshore settlements dating back to the Neo-Eneolithic period. The peninsula of Lin represents one of the core areas of human settlements of the entire proposed extension property. It seems to have been inhabited since the late Neolithic period and bares witnesses of human activity throughout Bronze and Iron Ages continuing also through the 4th – 3rd centuries B.C.E. during the First Illyrian Kingdom. The remains of the early Christian church in Lin Peninsula is very similar to the religious architecture of the same period in Ohrid.

Criterion (iii): bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;

The property is a testimony of Byzantine arts, displayed by more than 2,500 square metres of frescoes and more than 800 icons of worldwide fame. The churches of St. Sophia (11th century), Holy Mother of God Perivleptos and St. John Kaneo notably display a high level of artistic

achievements in their frescoes and theological representations, executed by local as well as foreign artists. Ancient architects erected immense basilicas, which were to serve as models for other basilicas for centuries. The development of ecclesiastical life along the shores of the lake, along with its own religious architecture, frescoes and icons, testifies to the significance of this region as a religious and cultural centre over the centuries.

The early Christian church of Lin in the proposed extension property, being very similar to the church of the same period in Ohrid, holds beautifully paved mosaic floors depicting biblical scenes (Eucharistic), religious symbols. These similarities between the World Heritage property and the proposed extension and researches on this issues are evidence that same ateliers of mosaic and painting masters operated in this area during the Early Christian period.

Criterion (iv): be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

The Lake Ohrid region boasts the most ancient Slavonic monastery and the first Slavonic University in the Balkans – the Ohrid literary school that spread writing, education and culture throughout the old Slavonic world. The old centre of Ohrid is a uniquely preserved, authentic ancient urban entity, adjusted to its coastal lake position and terrain, which is characterised by exceptional sacred and profane architecture. The architectural remains comprising a forum, public buildings, housing and sacred buildings with their infrastructure date back to the ancient town of Lychnidos (the former name of the town). The presence of early Christian architecture with the lofty basilicas from 4th to 6th centuries, together with the Byzantine architecture with a great number of preserved sacred buildings of different types from 9th to 14th centuries, is of paramount importance and contributes to the unity of the urban architecture of the city.

The remains of lake-shore pile dwellings are the oldest evidences of human settlements in the proposed extension. Together with the sepulchral and religious monuments and also traditional villages adjusted to natural coastal terrain, have created a unique landscape, underlined by its harmonious and functional relationship with the lake-dominated natural environment.

Criterion (vii): contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance

The preservation of Lake Ohrid dating from pre-glacial times is a superlative natural phenomenon. As a result of its geographic isolation and uninterrupted biological activity, Lake Ohrid provides a unique refuge for numerous endemic and relict freshwater species of flora and fauna. Its oligotrophic waters contain over 200 endemic species with high levels of endemism for benthic species in particular, including algae, diatoms, turbellarian flatworms, snails, crustaceans and 17 endemic species of fish. The Lake Ohrid region also harbours a rich birdlife.

Both the inscribed and the proposal for extension are areas of exceptional natural beauty with its morphology and clear waters set against the background of the Galicica, Mali i Thatë and Mocra

escarpment. Habitat types vary from rocky shorelines to sandy beaches and from wooded hillsides to swamps and tributaries. The current inscribed property of Lake Ohrid region has on its core the Lake Ohrid a deep, oligotrophic lake of tectonic origin and amongst the few ancient lakes in the world. This long existence of the lake allowed the independent development of an extraordinary ecosystem that harbours an outstanding degree of endemic biodiversity. The lake is host of about 1,500 species, and more than 300 endemic species, and it is probably by far the most diverse lake in the world taking surface area into account. The endemism occurs at different spatial scales with some species being endemic to the lake proper and other restricted to its adjacent and surrounding springs or only certain locations isolated by horizontal and vertical barriers. The most important locations for the conservation of the endemic aquatic biodiversity within Lake Ohrid in Albania include the feeder spring complex at Tushemisht/Zagorican (Drilon) in Albania. Currently there is no comprehensive and systematic review of the distribution of the endemic species in Lake Ohrid and its watershed, but probably a high number of endemic species are distributed throughout the lake, including four endemic species of sponges and several endemic fish. Other endemic species have been described from locations in the Albanian part of the lake, such as several endemic diatom species that have been published recently as new to science. A very high number of Palaearctic water birds regularly winter at Lake Ohrid, rendering it an internationally important wetland. The watershed of Lake Ohrid also harbours rich and important biodiversity. Based on a number of species of international and national conservation values have been identified in the Albanian part of the watershed: 44 taxa of invertebrates, 21 fish species, 6 amphibians, 13 reptiles, 137 birds, and 21 mammals.

Based on the strong morphological and ecological differences and genetic patterns observed, it might be concluded that some endemic species occur in the littoral and sublittoral of the Lake Ohrid. The authors (Stelbrink et al. 2016) hypothesize that possibly these ecological (along a vertical habitat gradient) and geographic (spatial isolation on a horizontal scale, patchiness of suitable habitats, and low mobility of the populations) speciation gave rise to the different species, though a clear distinction between these two modes poses a significant challenge. However, assuming that the different morphology and ecology are conservative features, it seems reasonable to assume that ecological speciation along a vertical habitat gradient may have been the predominant process in the early stage of speciation, triggered by the onset of deep-water conditions. Subsequent geographic processes then gave rise to the phylogeographic patterns observed today. Further on the evolution of the exceptionally rich biodiversity of Lake Ohrid is closely related to its specific ecology. Like for most other lakes, the ecology of Lake Ohrid is a mirror of its catchment and its ecoclimatological setting. The presence and evolution of the rich biodiversity of the lake was supported by the subaquatic inflow of cool, clean and oxygen rich water into the lake. The subaquatic springs contribute to the establishment of specific habitats for endemic species as they supply oxygen, nutrients, and ions and by creating distinctly different, but constant boundary conditions. The occurrence of a number of endemic taxa is exclusively linked to the springs and this seems to indicate that the spring water may have been important for the evolution of the unique ecosystem of Lake Ohrid. Due to the long

hydraulic residence time in Lake Ohrid the water through-flow is weak and the subaquatic springs contribute a significant portion of the water budget. The dilution of regular lake waters with pure spring waters is important for the oligotrophic status of Lake Ohrid and its subsequent low algae productivity. The lake is still highly oligotrophic, with a transparency of 14m, but the mean total phosphorus concentration has risen to 4.5 mg m⁻³. Lake Ohrid also provides invaluable archives of tectonic, climate, environmental, and evolutionary histories (Albrecht *et al.* 2010). Recently, Lake Ohrid has been recognized as a site of global importance for long term palaeoclimate reconstruction. With its long sediment record and key geographic location between the Mediterranean and Western Europe it is increasingly used to test hypotheses concerning biodiversity and the evolution of endemism in ancient lakes (Reed *et al.* 2010).

Draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

a) Brief Synthesis

The Lake Ohrid region, a mixed World Heritage property covering 83,350 ha, was inscribed for its natural values in 1979 and for its cultural values a year later. Lake Ohrid is a superlative natural phenomenon, providing refuge for numerous endemic and relict freshwater species of flora and fauna dating from the tertiary period. As a deep and ancient lake of tectonic origin, Lake Ohrid has existed continuously for approximately two to three million years. Its oligotrophic waters conserve over 300 species of plants and animals unique to the lake, including algae, turbellarian flatworms, snails, crustaceans and 17 endemic species of fish including two species of trout, as well as a rich birdlife.

Situated on the shores of Lake Ohrid, the town of Ohrid is one of the oldest human settlements in Europe. Built mostly between the 7th and 19th centuries, Ohrid is home to the oldest Slav monastery (dedicated to St. Pantelejmon) and more than 800 Byzantine-style icons of worldwide fame dating from the 11th century to the end of the 14th century. Ohrid's architecture represents the best preserved and most complete ensemble of ancient urban architecture of this part of Europe. Slav culture spread from Ohrid to other parts of Europe. Seven basilicas have thus far been discovered in archaeological excavations in the old part of Ohrid. These basilicas were built during the 4th, 5th and beginning of the 6th centuries and contain architectural and decorative characteristics that indisputably point to a strong ascent and glory of Lychnidos, the former name of the town. The structure of the city nucleus is also enriched by a large number of archaeological sites, with an emphasis on early Christian basilicas, which are also known for their mosaic floors. Special emphasis regarding Ohrid's old urban architecture must be given to the town's masonry heritage. In particular, Ohrid's traditional local influence can be seen among its well-preserved late-Ottoman urban residential architecture dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. The limited space for construction activities has led to the formation of a very narrow network of streets. Although the town of Struga is located along the shores of Lake Ohrid, town life is concentrated along the banks of the Crn Drim River, which flows out of the lake. The existence of Struga is connected with several fishermen settlements on wooden piles situated

along the lake shore. A great number of archaeological sites testify to origins from the Neolithic period, the Bronze Age, the Macedonian Hellenistic period, the Roman and the early Middle Age period. The convergence of well-conserved natural values with the quality and diversity of its cultural, material and spiritual heritage makes this region truly unique.

c) Statement of Integrity

The proposed extension is sufficiently large (11.378,6 ha) to adequately represent both natural and cultural, terrestrial and water features, and processes that are of importance for long term conservation of the lake's region rich biodiversity and exceptional natural beauty. The water area within the Ohrid and Prespa Biosphere Reserve and Pogradec Protected Landscape is the most important element of the lake's biodiversity. The property also protects all major terrestrial vegetation types and important breeding sites for the various species. With already nominated Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region in Macedonian side, the current proposal for nomination will fully encompass all of the features that convey the property's Outstanding Universal Value. The proposed extension fully encompasses all the features that convey the property's Outstanding Universal Value. The integrity of the property is strengthened by including to the already inscribed world heritage property, the one-third of Lake Ohrid located in Albanian territory and other areas essential to the protection of the lake's watershed, in order to adequately protect the lake's exceptional biodiversity. Main threats to the integrity of the property include uncoordinated urban development, increasing population, old infrastructure, inadequate treatment of wastewater and solid waste, illegal interventions to the water springs and tourism pressure. In addition, pollution from increased traffic influences the quality of the water, which leads to the depletion of natural resources. The overall coherence of the property, and particularly the relationship between urban buildings and the landscape, is vulnerable to the lack of adequate control of new development.

d) Statement of Authenticity

Lin Peninsula is reasonably well preserved, regarding its setting, visual integrity although uncontrolled incremental interventions have impacted the exterior outfittings of the residential buildings in the ensemble as well as the lakeshore. These are also vulnerable to major infrastructure projects and other developments. Concerning the cultural heritage values periodic conservation works have been carried out. Archaeological evidences have been researched and documented, but still the underwater heritage of the site is not fully explored.

Even though the original residential function of the buildings has not changed over time, the exterior and interior outfittings of many residential buildings, have been altered to improve living conditions. Still original features and volumes are conserved to a good extent. Reconstructions often used materials identical to those used at the time of construction and new materials have also been used, which presents a threat for the authenticity of the property.

e) Requirements for protection and management

The Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region has several layers of legal protection. The protection of cultural heritage is regulated by the Law on Cultural Heritage Protection (Official Gazette of RM No. 20/04, 115/07), by-laws and a law declaring the old city core of Ohrid as a cultural heritage of particular importance (Official Gazette of RM No. 47/11). The protection of natural heritage is regulated by the Law on Nature Protection (Official Gazette of RM No. 67/2004, 14/2006 and 84/2007), including within and outside of protected areas. There is also the Law on Managing the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of the Ohrid Region (Official Gazette of RM No. 75/10). Legal instruments need to be kept updated and implemented to protect the property.

The property is managed and protected through a range of relevant management documents, and an effective overall management plan is a clear long-term requirement. The “Physical Plan of the Republic of Macedonia” of 2004 provides the most successful long-term and integrated document for land management, providing a vision for the purpose, protection, organization and landscape of the country and how to manage it. This plan needs to be maintained and updated regularly, although some deficiencies have been noted in the general implementation of urban planning regulations and plans.

The property is managed by two ministries (the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Environment), via three municipalities (Ohrid, Struga and Debrca), although the municipalities legally do not have the authority to protect cultural and natural heritage. The Institute for Protection of Monuments of Culture and Museums in Ohrid has the authority to protect cultural heritage, and the Natural History Museum Dr Nikola Nezlobinski in Struga is responsible for protecting movable heritage. The Galichica National Park is authorized to manage natural heritage within the park as a whole, and part of the cultural heritage located within the territory of the Park. The Institute for Hydrobiology in Ohrid is responsible for the continuous monitoring of the Lake Ohrid ecosystem, the research and care for Lake Ohrid’s flora and fauna, as well as the management of the fish hatchery, also to enrich the Lake’s fish stocks.

The inclusion of the proposed extension in the world heritage list is essential for an integrated management and protection of natural and cultural heritage of the whole area. Long-term protection and management in the proposed extension of natural and cultural assets is ensured through national legal protection such as national parks designation, core areas of biosphere reserves or other types of protected areas, cultural monuments and historic centre designation. The Management Plan for Pogradec Protected Landscape, also integrated with the General Local Plan for Pogradec Municipality are the key management and planning instruments for the area. Effective implementation of an integrated management plan and a multilateral integrated management system is required to guide the planning and management of this property. Key management issues include pollution control and reduction, fishery management, protection of attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, integration of local development with proposed World Heritage values, ecosystems, land use and livelihoods (in the buffer zone). Transboundary cooperative management agreements between the two countries as well as

agreements between local governments and other entities can enhance the achievement of management goals and ensure local community engagement in the component parts.

Names and contact information of official local institution/agency

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