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Subject: Submission of the updated report on the State of Conservation of the Sundarbans

Dear Director,

Please refer to the 41st Session of the World Heritage Committee (41 COM) decision 41 COM 7B.25 regarding the State of conservation report of The Sundarbans. I am forwarding herewith an updated report on the said subject received from the concerned agency in Bangladesh.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

Enclosure: As stated

Yours sincerely

(Kazi Intiaz Hossain)

Ambassador, Permanent Delegate to UNESCO

Ms. Mechtild Rössler

Director

World Heritage Center, UNESCO

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Copy for kind information to:

Mr. Abdullah Al Mohsin Chowdhury

Secretary

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Dhaka, Bangladesh

The Sundarbans (Bangladesh) (N 798)

Progress Report

On the decisions of 41COM.7B.25 of the World Heritage Committee on the Sundarbans

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh

29 November 2018



Executive summary

This report contains responses of the state party (i.e. the Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh) to each decision of 41 COM 7B.25 (2017) of the World Heritage Committee, current and future conservation initiatives for better management of the ecosystem, and potential major restorations and development activities near the property. In response to the recommendations, concerns and requests given in the Decisions of 41 COM 7B.25 of the World Heritage Committee, the Government of Bangladesh has taken steps on the conservation and management of the Sundarbans, the world's largest contiguous mangrove forest, in line with national policies, plans and programmes.

The Government reassures that it has not given any permission to any large-scale industry adjacent to the Sundarbans World Heritage property since the decision of 41COM 7B.25. Selection of a consulting firm for conducting a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is in the final stage (decision no 4 of 41 COM 7B.25).

The government has taken a number of additional measures and programmes such as Expansion of Protected Area, Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) Patrolling, Pirates free Sundarbans, Bangladesh Tiger Action Plan, National Tiger Recovery Programme, Strategy for the Sundarbans under Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 to monitor and further improve the ecological management of the property as well as the whole mangrove area. The country is receiving its due share under the Ganges water sharing treaty of 1996 and to optimize its uses the government has taken many water conservation activities such as restoration of the Gorai river off take for maintenance of continuous flow through Gorai river system that feeds the south-west region as well as the Sundarbans. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is being done before any dredging programme. The transboundary cooperation between India and Bangladesh has improved the status of biodiversity of the Sundarbans Heritage area. The countries have agreed to conduct studies to develop indicators to measure health of the ecosystems of the Sundarbans and to identify impacts of climate change on its ecosystems (decision no 5, 6 and 7 of 41COM 7B.25).

The 'National Oil Spill and Chemical Contingency Plan (NOSCOP)' has been prepared to provide a complete set of instruction that must be followed by all participating agencies in order to prevent, control and manage oil and chemical spillage emergencies in a coordinated way. Its implementation will help on immediate response in cases of oil and chemical spill emergencies. This document also serves as a guide for long-term planning and preventive mechanisms. A Vessel Traffic Management Information System (VTMIS) has been developed and in the process of installation for better management of ships to protect from negative impacts on the property and would help restore and conserve the country's coastal and marine ecosystem (decision no 8 of 41COM 7B.25).

The government reiterates that all the concerns (under decision 10) will be addressed during the SEA. The Maitree Super Thermal Power Project at Rampal has been approved through a rigorous EIA and the plant has ensured that all pollution control measures would be in place (decision no. 9 and 10).