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**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

**CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF
THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Forty-third session

Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan

30 June – 10 July 2019

Item 13 of the Provisional Agenda: International Assistance

13. Examination of International Assistance requests

ADDENDUM

This document contains an Emergency assistance request within the purview of the World Heritage Committee, which was received after document WHC/19/43.COM/13 was issued.

I. INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE REQUEST FOR DECISION BY THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

1. In accordance with Paragraph 241 of the *Operational Guidelines*, decisions on Emergency Assistance requests above US\$ 75,000 are made by the World Heritage Committee, while decisions on requests below US\$ 75,000 are made by the Chairperson. A request from Seychelles for US\$ 96,850 was received after document WHC/19/43.COM/13 was issued, and is presented herewith.
2. Mention of the decision made by the World Heritage Committee on this request will be integrated into Decision **49 COM 13** (see document WHC/19/43.COM/13).

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

N°	Region	State Party – Name of activity	Amount requested (US\$)	Amount recommended for approval (US\$)
1	Africa	Seychelles – Minimising impacts of the invasive yellow crazy ant <i>Anoplolepis gracilipes</i> at the Vallée de Mai UNESCO World Heritage site, Seychelles to preserve its outstanding universal value	96,850	96,850

Funds available for a possible approval of requests under the Emergency Assistance budget as of 30 June 2019: US\$ 115,775

Total amount for approval by the Committee: US\$ 96,850

Comments by the Secretariat: sufficient funds available.

A summary of this request is presented in the next pages. The full text is available with the Secretariat.

REQUEST N° 1
Emergency Assistance
Natural Heritage
Africa

State Party: Seychelles (*Small Island Developing State*)

Name of activity: Minimising impacts of the invasive yellow crazy ant *Anoplolepis gracilipes* at the Vallée de Mai UNESCO World Heritage site, Seychelles to preserve its outstanding universal value

Amount requested: US\$ 96,850

Status of dues to the World Heritage Fund as at 31 December 2018: n.a.

Previous contributions from the World Heritage Fund for this property in the past ten years: none.

Background:

The Vallée de Mai on the Seychelles island of Praslin is the only site where all six endemic palm species of Seychelles occur and is also a stronghold for numerous endemic species found only on Praslin or within this habitat type. It also contains 13 of the 15 endemic Seychelles reptile species and at last 5 of the 12 endemic amphibians.

In 2009, the Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF), which has managed and protected the site since 1989, observed yellow crazy ants *Anoplolepis gracilipes* in the Vallée de Mai for the first time. Yellow crazy ants are listed in the top five worst invasive alien species in the world and have devastated several island ecosystems to which they have been introduced, triggering cascading impacts on many groups of species.

Yellow crazy ants spread into the Vallée de Mai in 2009. Crazy ant distribution and abundance monitoring was quickly established by SIF after their discovery at the site. For the next 6 years, surveys showed crazy ant numbers and distribution to remain relatively stable and *A. gracilipes* remained around the margins of the Vallée de Mai. In 2016, the population spread substantially across the site. Funding was consequently secured by SIF in early 2017 from the IUCN-administered Inva'Ziles initiative to research, trial and deploy control measures across the Vallée de Mai; the measures taken, however, have not yet slowed the yellow crazy ants' incursion across the site nor prevented their numbers from increasing. Consequently, at the end of 2018, for the first time, the highly invasive yellow crazy ant covered 100% of the Vallée de Mai, and at much higher average density than has been recorded since its introduction to the site.

Of the 13 endemic reptile species and 5 endemic amphibians occurring in the Vallée de Mai, yellow crazy ants have been documented as having impacts (either lower temporal or spatial abundance linked to crazy ant occurrence, or multiple attacks recorded) on at least 8 reptile and 2 amphibian species, with the other herpetofauna species also considered likely to be experiencing (undocumented) impacts. This leads to a conservative estimate of 56% of endemic herpetofauna of the Vallée at risk and probably more. Furthermore, at least 2 Seychelles black parrot nests have failed due to yellow crazy ant swarming in the last 2 breeding seasons, the chicks overwhelmed by the formic acid sprayed by the ants.

Objectives:

The proposed project will directly address the threat to the Vallée de Mai from yellow crazy ants and ultimately minimise the impacts by 5 main activities:

- (1) Establishing effective control measures against yellow crazy ants and identifying a suitable method for long-term control of the species at the Vallée de Mai;
- (2) setting up and conducting regular monitoring of yellow crazy ant abundance and distribution, and their impacts;
- (3) deploying the identified control measure(s) from the first activity across the Vallée de Mai and assessing the effectiveness with the second activity;
- (4) implementing an education and outreach programme to raise awareness on Praslin of the damaging impacts of yellow crazy ants and reduce the threat of further crazy ant population expansion; and
- (5) incorporating yellow crazy ant monitoring and control into management by integrating existing monitoring of crazy ants into the new management plan for the property.

Duration of the project:

Estimated to 18 months

Expected results:

<i>Expected results</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of verification</i>
1. Significantly reduced YCA abundance across VdM	1.i) Bi-monthly rapid assessment surveys of YCA show declining average abundance 1.ii) Annual pitfall survey data indicates declining average abundance of YCA	1.i) Survey datasets and monthly reports 1.ii) Annual YCA report and dataset
2. Diminished YCA distribution across VdM (or local eradication)	2.i) Bi-monthly rapid assessment surveys of YCA show shrinking distribution of YCA across VdM 2.ii) Annual pitfall survey data indicates diminished distribution of YCA across VdM	2.i) Survey datasets and monthly reports 2. ii) Annual YCA report and dataset
3. Recovery of native fauna in VdM	3.i) Annual pitfall survey data shows increase in native ants 3.ii) Surveys of native fauna on coco de mer trees show increasing mollusc encounters and stable/increasing gecko encounters. 3.iii) Herpetofauna surveys indicates stable or increasing gecko, chameleon and treefrog encounters. 3.iv) New monitoring to be established for ground-dwelling fauna including skinks, snakes, crabs and other invertebrates.	3.i) Annual YCA report and dataset 3.ii) Datasets and monthly reports 3.iii) Herpetofauna survey reports and datasets 3.iv) Monitoring data and monthly reports
4. Reduced threat to black parrot nests from YCA disturbance	4.i) Annual breeding season monitoring indicates no nests lost to YCA	4.i) End-of-season black parrot report
5. Knowledge-transfer to local staff for further control to be done at house by SIF	5.i) Number of trained local staff for YCA control, monitoring and eradication techniques (aiming for at least 5 staff)	5.i) VSC VSC monthly reports, local staff conducting control methods and training others
6. Increased awareness of YCA occurrence and impacts for the VdM amongst Praslinois	6.i) Questionnaires. 6.ii) Number of attendees at presentations/ talks/ exhibitions/ events. 6.iii) Number of media, social media and newsletter articles produced. 6.iv) Measured 'reach' or 'likes' of social media posts and video views. 6.v) Circulation figures for newsletter articles 6.vi) No public resistance to or criticism of YCA control measures for VdM	6. For all, communications officer report and records

Budget:

Total activity budget (in US\$):	111,850
National or other contributions (in US\$):	15,000
Amount requested from the World Heritage Fund (in US\$):	96,850
1. Organization None	
2. Personnel / consultancy services (fees)	36,000
International expert (team leader) for 12 months	15,000
International expert (project officer) for 12 months	12,000
National expert for 12 months	9,000
3. Travel	4,000
International travel costs for 2 experts	3,000
Domestic travel cost (Boat transport Mahe-Praslin)	1,000
4. Accommodation & meals	14,000
Accommodation for 14 months	14,000
5. Equipment	37,000
Bait/poison	24,000
Bait stations, manual spreaders, petrol-driven blowers	10,000
Consumables (pitfall traps, flagging tape, stakes, 50m tapes, stationary, ethanol, sample pots, attractant)	1,000
Technical equipment (for surveys - GPS, torches, laptop, hard drive)	2,000
6. Evaluation & reporting	1,000
Evaluation	1,000
7. Miscellaneous	4,850
Training days for pesticide handling (15 people)	1,850
Import duties & handling fees on equipment	500
Education & Outreach activities	2,000
Miscellaneous	500

Recommendation by IUCN

In general, the proposal is clear and well written, and describes a conservation emergency that requires immediate funding in order to avoid likely imminent extinctions of endemic species.

The alarming evidence presented, of sharp and drastic declines in endemic invertebrates and vertebrates following the expansion and increase in density of the yellow crazy ant (YCA) matches what has been observed on other islands that have suffered similar explosions of YCA population, which appear to have resulted in extinctions of endemic species and to have brought others to the brink of extinction. In the absence of YCA control, major declines in ecological keystone species can be expected, to be followed by changes in ecosystem structure and function. These changes directly impact the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve World Heritage property.

The work plan is well prepared and logical, and considering that there has been much recent work on control techniques for YCA, a successful control programme should be feasible with the involvement of the correct experts. The budget lines are also reasonable for a local, short-term eradication project.

IUCN therefore considers that the present request may be approved considering the urgent nature of the threat and the critical importance for a control programme. Following approval, the State Party should also be requested to provide clarification on its long-term funding plan beyond this 18-month International Assistance Request, as longer-term management will certainly be required to maintain the YCA population at acceptable levels. Should the State Party require any recommendation of experts, IUCN would be ready to offer advice.

Recommendation by the Secretariat

The objectives of the emergency assistance request submitted by the Republic of the Seychelles (through the Seychelles Island Foundation (SIF)) are to remove the threat of invasive yellow crazy ant *Anoplolepis gracilipes* to the site's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) by eradicating their populations, and to also establish a surveillance and monitoring system for these invasive species.

The request qualifies as emergency assistance as the property is in imminent danger of severe damage due to sudden phenomena and the projects aims to undertake emergency measures for the safeguarding of the property. After due consideration of this request, justification is made for an emergency grant. Taking into consideration the quasi uncontrollable nature of the invasive species phenomenon, it is absolutely necessary to deploy all available means to address this threat because the sooner it is dealt with, the less it will spread, and the easier it will be to eradicate.

Following further consultation with the State Party to revise the amount allocated to the 2 international consultants, which was US\$ 59,400 representing approx. 45% of the overall budget, the revised budget lines are clear and reasonable. The action plan is also logical and well prepared. It shows how it will include capacity building in many ways, which will give sustainability to this project and prevent any further damage by the invasive yellow crazy ants.

For these reasons, the Secretariat recommends the approval of the request.