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IUCN Evaluation of the Amami-Oshima Island, Tokunoshima Island, Northern part of Okinawa Island, and Iriomote Island – Nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List

Progress report on IUCN evaluation and request for supplementary information

Dear Ambassador,

Further to my letter of 8 November 2019, and as noted in previous correspondence, IUCN seeks to develop and maintain a dialogue with States Parties during the evaluation process of all nominations. As per the Operational Guidelines (paragraph 149 and Annex 6 – ‘Evaluation procedures of the Advisory Bodies for nominations’), this letter also provides the short interim report outlining the status and any issues relevant to evaluations, which is requested to be sent by IUCN before 31 January 2020.

The IUCN World Heritage Panel is in the course of examining World Heritage nominations for natural and mixed properties, and cultural landscapes. This process will conclude in March/April 2020, following which the IUCN evaluation report will be issued to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. At its first meeting held in the week of 2 December 2019, the IUCN Panel examined in detail each nomination dossier, reports and desktop reviews of field evaluators and external reviewers, as well as other references regarding the nominated properties. They also examined the supplementary information received via email on 26 November 2019.

The Panel greatly appreciated the efforts that have been made in relation to this nomination, and will be discussing the nomination again at its second meeting, to be held in March 2020. At this stage, the Panel noted a number of points where further additional information is required, and we would be grateful for the State Party’s response on the following points:

1. The IUCN Panel wishes to better understand whether there are potential threats from logging/timber extraction activities to the different component parts of the nominated property and within their buffer zones. Please provide additional clarifications regarding the extent and location of such activities, including whether the logging is traditional or commercial, and what logging methods are being used (including photographs showing the logging operation and post-logging views immediately after cutting). In addition, please also clarify in which component parts’ buffer zones logging is located (or could be undertaken), and the extent of this (including maximum area that could be logged in each component part’s buffer zone).

2. Recognising that a large proportion of rivers and streams within the nominated property and buffer zones have been impacted by concrete structures, flow regulation, alterations and barriers, please elaborate on long-term river restoration options and possible dam removals to secure and enhance integrity, natural processes and functional connectivity, especially for species such as diadromous fish and rheophytes.

3. The IUCN Panel noted in particular the significance of the Katoku River and estuary, as the last free-flowing river within the Amami Island component, and the importance of retaining this status free of infrastructure developments. In this context, please provide a progress update on the planned extension, so that the whole length of the Yakugachi and Katoku Rivers are included within the nominated property and buffer zone, as well as the feasibility and the State Party’s willingness to halt further structural developments. Please also advise if there is any intention to extend the site or its buffer zones in the future.

4. The IUCN Panel notes that among the proposals for the Tourist Management Plan is the introduction of a cap on the number of tourists and visitors, in accordance with carrying capacity studies, especially at ecologically sensitive sites such as Iriomote Island. The Panel further takes note of how accessible the core zone of the property is by road and the consequent impacts of road kills on endangered species, especially the reported very high incidents involving Iriomote cat. The State Party is kindly requested to provide an update on the preparation of the Tourism Management Plan, including provisions related to the above-mentioned cap on

tourists; additional measures, such as radar signs showing drivers' speed, to reduce speed and limit road kills; and monitoring plans to mitigate the impacts of these threats to any of the species on the islands.

5. It is envisaged that climate change will alter the pattern of climate related events, such as typhoons. However, there is limited information of the potential effects of climate change in the nomination dossier or how damage caused by, for example more frequent and stronger typhoons, would be managed. Climate change, with the rise of sea level, will potentially also alter habitats, especially in low-lying areas of the nominated component parts. Considering these potential impacts, please provide further information on the readiness and mitigation measures in anticipation of the various negative effects of climate change, and elaborate on how potential erosion and landslips within the nominated property and buffer zone will be managed.

We would appreciate your response to the above points as soon as possible, in order to facilitate the evaluation process, but **no later than the 28 February 2020**, as per paragraph 148 of the Operational Guidelines. Please note that any information submitted after this date will not be considered by IUCN in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee. It should be noted, however, that while IUCN will carefully consider any supplementary information submitted, it cannot properly evaluate a completely revised nomination or large amounts of new information submitted at the last minute. So we request to keep your response concise and respond only to the above requests.

Supplementary information should also be submitted officially in two copies to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in order for it to be registered as part of the nomination. An electronic copy of any supplementary information to both the UNESCO World Heritage Centre (a.balsamo@unesco.org) and IUCN Headquarters (ulrika.aberg@iucn.org) would also be helpful.


Taking into account your response, IUCN will formulate its final recommendation to the World Heritage Committee which will meet from 29 June to 9 July 2020 in Fuzhou, China.

In the interest of ensuring full transparency and dialogue regarding the IUCN evaluation process, we are happy to respond to any questions you may wish to raise regarding IUCN's work on the World Heritage Convention, including the above points. We would be pleased to organise a meeting via Skype or conference call as an alternative. Both you and/or your representatives are also welcome to visit IUCN's headquarters in Switzerland to meet in person if you wish, on this nomination, or on any other matter of interest.

Please do not hesitate to contact Ulrika Åberg, World Heritage Officer (Tel: +41 22 999 0221; email: ulrika.aberg@iucn.org) if you have any questions regarding this request, or if you would wish to arrange a meeting or phone call to discuss this request.

Please allow me to reiterate our thanks for your support of the World Heritage Convention and for the conduct of IUCN's recent mission. We thank you for your cooperation in providing this very important information, which will facilitate the panel in making its recommendations.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Shadie
Director - World Heritage Programme

cc. Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, Ms Mami Oyama, Secretary-General
UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Mr Feng Jing and Mr Alessandro Balsamo
IUCN Asia Regional Office, Ms Aban Marker Kabraji, Regional Director