



IUCN  
Rue Mauverney 28  
1196 Gland  
Switzerland

Tel. +41 22 999 0000  
Fax +41 22 999 0002  
www.iucn.org

Ms Teona Giuachvili  
Minister Counsellor, Chargée d'Affaires a.i.  
Permanent Delegation of Georgia to UNESCO  
Maison de l'UNESCO  
Bureau M4.41  
1, rue Miollis  
75732 Paris Cedex 15

19 December 2019

## **IUCN Evaluation of the Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands – Nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List**

### **Progress report on IUCN evaluation and request for supplementary information**

Dear Madam,

Further to the above nomination to the World Heritage List, I am writing with information on the progress with the IUCN evaluation. 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 technical evaluation mission to the Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands was undertaken by Ms Josephine Langley and Ms Angie Stringer from 29 September to 9 October 2019. The evaluators greatly appreciated the excellent support and co-operation provided by your colleagues in the preparation and implementation of the mission, and the kind welcome of the State Party throughout the mission. Please convey our sincere thanks to all of the officials, scientists and contributors that assisted the mission.

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.

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 Panel notes that both terrestrial and aquatic systems are reported to be affected by a range of invasive alien species (IAS) including fungi, plants and invertebrates. Please provide additional information on the number and status of IAS within the property, and elaborate on the State Party's management and assessment of IAS and plans to establish a common monitoring strategy for all components.

2. The Panel recognises that the nominated property has a relatively high level of floral and faunal diversity; however, in the nomination dossier some species groups have not been comprehensively documented. Could the State Party please therefore provide further details on invertebrates (including species numbers), fungi and freshwater species (especially sturgeon) recorded in each component of the nominated property, together with any available literature on surveys in this regard.

3. The Panel wishes to better understand whether the site is large enough to sustain all the species it is intended to protect and the rationale for the nominated property's current configuration, where all component parts except 4 and 5 are isolated from each other. In particular, we would be grateful if you could confirm the feasibility and the State Party's willingness to create a single, larger buffer zone, enveloping components 4, 5, 6 and 7. This would not only increase integrity, but also help protect important functional connectivity for large wide-ranging mammals (such as bear and wolf), as well as river habitats for the critically endangered sturgeon.

4. The Panel also notes that the dunes that separate the mires (at components 3, 6 and 7) from the Black Sea are not included in the nominated area nor any buffer zone. Protection of these dunes is considered important for the integrity of the nominated property. Please provide information on the possibility of also extending the nominated area or buffer zone to incorporate these dune systems.

5. Please provide a progress update and current status on any developments of ports and shipping facilities in the vicinity of the nominated property and measures to ensure that the negative impacts from such projects would not damage the values and integrity of the nominated property.

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](mailto:a.balsamo@unesco.org)) and IUCN Headquarters ([ulrika.aberg@iucn.org](mailto: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, to discuss 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](mailto: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