



STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT

For the World Heritage property

National Park Durmitor (Montenegro)

1. Executive Summary of the report

Based on previous continued cooperation with the World Heritage Centre and its advisory bodies and the previous Decision of the World Heritage Committee No. 43 COM 7B.19, The Government of Montenegro on its session held on 28th of November 2019 had adopted the *Decision on Changing the Decision on Amending the Special Purpose Spatial Plan for Durmitor Region*. This Decision was submitted to the WHC on 05th of December 2019, by the National Commission of Montenegro for UNESCO.

This document is essentially important as a basic and strategic document to address most of the requests set by the World Heritage Committee.

2. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

- a) *Notes the conclusions of the November 2018 joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Advisory mission, which reviewed a potential boundary modification and the state of conservation of the property, and encourages the State Party to implement all mission recommendations, particularly to:*
1. *Re-consider the boundary modification proposal for the property so as not to propose any further exclusions from the property and to implement recommendations of the 2005 mission to compensate for areas excluded at that time,*
 2. *Launch a process to designate a buffer zone for the property with the primary objective to protect it from anthropogenic pressures, taking into account ecological and visual considerations;*

After the completion of the tasks defined through the *Decision on Changing the Decision on Amending the Special Purpose Spatial Plan for Durmitor Region* the process of the assessment of current and definition of potentially new boundaries of the core zone will be launched, in accordance with the Decision of the World Heritage Committee and 2005 mission's recommendations.

Preparation and consultations for the process of designation of buffer zone are already ongoing. However, this process shall be led in parallel with the boundary modification process for the core zone in order to have to conduct comprehensive procedure which will result in adequate spatial planning for this Region. It is important to underline that the buffer zone of the National park on national level has been already designated, which will be used as a started point for the definition of the buffer zone of the world heritage property.

- b) *Notes with utmost concern that the area of the property excluded from Durmitor National Park in 2013 is no longer subject to a national park-level protection regime, and therefore urges the State Party to reinstate the boundaries of the National Park to their configuration prior to the 2013 exclusion to ensure the entire property is effectively protected, to not proceed with any further development plans in this zone, and to continue preventing such developments in future;*

As stated in previous chapter, the process of the revision of the boundaries of the core zone will be launched upon the request of the World Heritage Committee. The result of this process, before its final approval on national level, will be shared with the World Heritage Centre in order to gain respective review of relevant advisory bodies.

- c) *Also notes with utmost concern the 2018 mission findings that plans are being considered for a significant expansion of the existing small-scale ski centre within the property, which pre-dates its inscription, and that the construction of a water pipeline from the karst lake Modro Jezero to a newly built water reservoir in the Savin Kuk ski zone has already commenced;*

and

- d) *Considers that an expansion of ski infrastructure developments inside the property would constitute an ascertained danger to the OUV of the property, in line with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*, and therefore also urges the State Party to unequivocally abandon any such plans and developments, and to ensure that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the constructed water pipeline is undertaken, including impacts on the karst flow regime, in line with the IUCN Advice Note on Environmental Assessment, prior to any operation of the pipeline;*

Following concerns and requests set by the previous WHC Decision, the Government of Montenegro has temporarily suspended all plans regarding potential expansion of ski zones in the boundaries of the world heritage property. In addition, last year Montenegro had invited new Advisory Mission which came exclusively for the purposes of consultations with different stakeholders regarding ski infrastructure and policies connected to it which affect the property. This suspension will be on force until the Report of the Advisory Mission comes and gives the state party recommendations for future steps.

The process of preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the constructed water pipeline including impacts on the karst flow regime, will start soon and will be based on IUCN Advice Note on Environmental Assessment. After the completion of the document, it will be translated and sent to the World Heritage Committee for review.

- e) *Acknowledges that the State Party kept the World Heritage Centre informed about the upgrade of an existing transmission line which crosses part of the property, in line with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, and requests the State Party to apply strict environmental safeguard standards during construction and maintenance works;*

After the information submitted to the World Heritage Centre, the state party received petition and request by local community to change the route of the existing transmission line in order to remove it from the settlement. Their proposal is still subject of the discussion of relevant national authorities and after the completion of the process the initiative will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review.

- f) *Noting the severe impacts on the Tara riverbed from the construction of a new motorway crossing located upstream of the property, expresses its concern about potential downstream impacts, and thus also requests the State Party to carefully assess any impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, including on the endangered Danube salmon, and to submit the findings to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN;*

Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism and its relevant bodies and agencies carefully monitor the impacts of the construction of a motorway on downstream area.

- g) *Also noting the pressures from increasing visitor numbers and tourism development in the property, commends the State Party for initiating the process of revoking the Plan of Temporary Structures around Black Lake, and also encourages the State Party to consult with the Sustainable Tourism Programme of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre to develop a sustainable tourism management strategy for the property;*

The state party with its relevant authorities is preparing to launch the procedure of preparation of the proper Management plan which could integrate different policies in order to produce a comprehensive strategy for the area. The plan should be based on *Sustainable Tourism Programme of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre*.

- a) *Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2020, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 44th session in 2020.*

Following this Report, the National Commission of Montenegro for UNESCO will transmit to the World Heritage Centre all relevant documents which refer to any request or claim stated in this document or the Decision 43 COM 7B.87.

3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State(s) Party(ies) which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value

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4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity.

During the last year Montenegro had submitted to the World Heritage Centre two Information regarding the activities in the buffer zone of the properties. The National Commission of Montenegro for UNESCO had requested and accordingly transferred to the WHC information from the Ministry of Defense, on 11th of October. The state party received information from WHC that the document is sent to the advisory bodies and that it will be contacted if needed for further explanation.

The other information was dedicated to the initiative of project of reconstruction of Hotel Durmitor, submitted to the WHC on 05th of August. The state party received positive feedback and the project is ongoing.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

Authorities of Montenegro agree to put the Report on the website.

6. Signature of the Authority

Secretary General of the National Commission of Montenegro for UNESCO


Milica Nikolic




STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT

For the World Heritage property

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1. Executive Summary of the report

Based on previous continued cooperation with the World Heritage Centre and its advisory bodies and the previous Decision of the World Heritage Committee No. 43 COM 7B.19, The Government of Montenegro on its session held on 28th of November 2019 had adopted the *Decision on Changing the Decision on Amending the Special Purpose Spatial Plan for Durmitor Region*. This Decision was submitted to the WHC on 05th of December 2019, by the National Commission of Montenegro for UNESCO. This document is essentially important as a basic and strategic document to address most of the requests set by the World Heritage Committee. This Report is prepared by the National Commission of Montenegro for UNESCO and based on the extensive information received by the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism in coordination with relevant institutions in charged for the protection of the environment.

2. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

- a) *Notes the conclusions of the November 2018 joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Advisory mission, which reviewed a potential boundary modification and the state of conservation of the property, and encourages the State Party to implement all mission recommendations, particularly to:*
- 1. Re-consider the boundary modification proposal for the property so as not to propose any further exclusions from the property and to implement recommendations of the 2005 mission to compensate for areas excluded at that time,*
 - 2. Launch a process to designate a buffer zone for the property with the primary objective to protect it from anthropogenic pressures, taking into account ecological and visual considerations;*

After the completion of the tasks defined through the *Decision on Changing the Decision on Amending the Special Purpose Spatial Plan for Durmitor Region* the process of the assessment of current and definition of potentially new boundaries of the core zone will be launched, in accordance with the Decision of the World Heritage Committee and 2005 mission's recommendations.

Preparation and consultations for the process of designation of buffer zone are already ongoing, based on the discussions launched during last Advisory mission, held end of October and beginning of November 2019. As agreed, this process shall be led in parallel with the boundary modification process for the core zone in order to have to conduct comprehensive procedure which will result in adequate spatial planning for this Region. It is important to underline that the buffer zone of the National park on national level has been already designated, which will be used as a started point for the definition of the buffer zone of the world heritage property.

In order to address these issues on adequate manner, the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism, by the end of February 2020, will form the Working Group with the task to reconsider boundaries of core zone and to designate boundaries of buffer zone of the World Heritage Site – National Park Durmitor. The process will be conducted in line with the Convention and its Operational Guidelines.

- b) *Notes with utmost concern that the area of the property excluded from Durmitor National Park in 2013 is no longer subject to a national park-level protection regime, and therefore urges the State Party to reinstate the boundaries of the National Park to their configuration prior to the 2013 exclusion to ensure the entire property is effectively protected, to not proceed with any further development plans in this zone, and to continue preventing such developments in future;*

As stated in previous chapter, the process of revision of the boundaries of the core zone will be launched promptly, upon the request of the World Heritage Committee. The result of this process, before its final approval on national level, will be shared with the World Heritage Centre in order to gain respective review of relevant advisory bodies.

Additionally, in response to this request, the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism has applied for the UNDP and GEF joint fund, with the project: "Addressing Biodiversity Threats by Improved Management of Protected Areas and Incorporating Biodiversity Conservation Objectives and sustainable use in the field of spatial planning and key sectoral practices". Once approved, the project activities will help the Government to meet the recommendations of the UNESCO / IUCN mission, in order to ensure proper protection of *outstanding universal values* of the property. The specific expected impacts of this project are to review current zoning in the national park, which will be supported through the development of the required Studies, and in particular the designation of a buffer zone for the natural property of the Durmitor National Park, with the primary objective of protecting it from anthropogenic pressures, taking into account environmental and visual factors.

- c) Also notes with utmost concern the 2018 mission findings that plans are being considered for a significant expansion of the existing small-scale ski centre within the property, which pre-dates its inscription, and that the construction of a water pipeline from the karst lake Modro Jezero to a newly built water reservoir in the Savin Kuk ski zone has already commenced;
and
- d) Considers that an expansion of ski infrastructure developments inside the property would constitute an ascertained danger to the OUV of the property, in line with Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines, and therefore also urges the State Party to unequivocally abandon any such plans and developments, and to ensure that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the constructed water pipeline is undertaken, including impacts on the karst flow regime, in line with the IUCN Advice Note on Environmental Assessment, prior to any operation of the pipeline;

Following concerns and requests set by the previous WHC Decision, the Government of Montenegro has temporarily suspended all plans regarding potential expansion of ski zones in the boundaries of the world heritage property. In addition, last year Montenegro had invited new Advisory Mission which came exclusively for the purposes of consultations with different stakeholders regarding ski infrastructure and policies connected to it which affect the property. This suspension will be on force until the Report of the Advisory Mission comes and gives the state party recommendations for future steps. But, even before receiving the Report from the Advisory Mission, Government of Montenegro implemented an urgent measure in December 2019 and officially started the procedure for the amendments of disputed planning document for Savin Kuk area by adoption *Decision on Changing the Decision on Amending the Special Purpose Spatial Plan for Durmitor Region*. In this act, Government clearly stated that the scope of the ski zone Savin Kuk must be reduced to the acceptable measure, in line with the recommendations of UNESCO Missions and *Sustainable Tourism Programme of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre*.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the constructed water pipeline was developed in parallel with the design process, but during the last Advisory Mission it was concluded that this Assessment was not developed in line with IUCN Advice Note on Environmental Assessment. Therefore, the process of amendment of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the constructed water pipeline including impacts on the karst flow regime, will start soon and will be based on IUCN's document. After the completion of the document, it will be translated and sent to the World Heritage Committee for review.

Additionally, the proposed activities within above mentioned UNDP/GEF project are aimed to support the management of the national park in their efforts to develop low-impact tourism

products, promote the status of a World Heritage Site and value its pristine nature as its key element.

The project will bring best available management tools (such as the UNESCO World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Handbook), best practices and approaches to sustainable tourism development and adapt them to the Durmitor National Park. The aim of the project is to ensure an adequate protection regime and strengthened capacities to protect Montenegro's internationally recognized "hot spots" of biodiversity, as well as to ensure that key sectors take biodiversity into account in their practices. Activities proposed for Durmitor National Park are recognized under Component 1 of the Project: *Protection of valuable and/or vulnerable biodiversity inside and outside protected areas within which the project will focus on direct impact on internationally recognized biodiversity hotspots (KBA, Ramsar, UNESCO areas, etc.).*

- e) *Acknowledges that the State Party kept the World Heritage Centre informed about the upgrade of an existing transmission line which crosses part of the property, in line with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, and requests the State Party to apply strict environmental safeguard standards during construction and maintenance works;*

For the entire route of transmission line from Lastva to Pljevlja an Environmental Impact Assessment Study was prepared and approved by the Environmental Protection Agency of Montenegro. By the request of EBRD as a financial body, National Parks of Montenegro additionally issued a report "Valorization and Proposal of Biodiversity Conservation Measures on the Corridor of Transmission Line Lastva-Pljevlja in the area of Durmitor National Park (Tara River Canyon) in order to mitigate and remedy the consequences". This report gave a positive opinion on the transmission line route, but also a number of recommendations in terms of impact on biotic components. Attention was drawn to the fact that the construction of the transmission line will have a greater impact on the ambient values of the area concerned than on biotic components.

After the information shared with the World Heritage Centre, the state party received petition and request by local community to change the route of the existing transmission line in order to remove it from the settlement. After several field trips and intensive communication with the locals, an alternative route was defined, which still remains within the wider corridor approved by the Environmental Impact Assessment Study. Within new position of transmission line there would be significantly less private land owned by individuals, and more state-owned land. A number of locals, who are signatories to the Petition, agree with the proposed alternative route which brings transmission line even further from Tara bridge, reducing in that manner visual impact of poles and cables on the bridge.

This proposal is still subject of the discussion of relevant national authorities and after the completion of the process the initiative will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review.

- f) *Noting the severe impacts on the Tara riverbed from the construction of a new motorway crossing located upstream of the property, expresses its concern about potential downstream impacts, and thus also requests the State Party to carefully assess any impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, including on the endangered Danube salmon, and to submit the findings to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN;*

Construction works of the Bar-Boljare highway (sections Smokovac-Uvac-Mateševo) are not carried out in the core zone of WH site (Tara River Canyon protected zone is about 50 km away), neither the central zone of MAB area of Tara River Biosphere Reserve, but in its transition zone. However, due to the complexity of this capital infrastructure project, as well as sensitivity of the area in which demanding and complex construction works are performed, the state of Montenegro has put in place a strong control mechanism, so constant attention of the competent authorities will be permanently present.

In December 2018 Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism engaged experts who are performing regular biological monitoring of the Tara River on a monthly basis. Biological monitoring of the Tara River, which aims at qualitative and quantitative analysis of the river bottom fauna, began in January 2019, at 3 sites. Monitoring is done by the expert team of the University of Montenegro (Faculty of Natural Sciences). This expert team had submitted to Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism 12 monthly reports which testify the about recovery of the living world, ie. benthic fauna, which is known as a segment that requires the longest recovery and restoration period. These reports are currently being compromised into comprehensive yearly report, which will be sent to the World Heritage Centre for a review.

However, as expected, there is an increased water turbidity and sediment accumulation in the Tara River due to construction works, leading to the depletion of the fauna, and the Ministry will continue the same biological monitoring throughout 2020 in order to provide a more detailed view of the river situation and to define and in cooperation with relevant stakeholders implement proper remediation measures for Tara River.

It is important to mention that all negative impacts of the construction work on the Tara River are timely foreseen in the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment Report, and in particular in the Environmental Impact Assessment Study for the construction works, which was a precondition for obtaining a construction permit. All construction works have to be carried out according to strict environmental protection measures from the Elaborate of Environmental

Impact Assessment, in terms of preventing, reducing or eliminating harmful impacts during the construction of the highway.

All competent authorities have taken additional prevention and remediation measures (Remediation plan and environmental monitoring program after implementation of remediation measures, biological monitoring of bottom fauna etc.) in order to mitigate the impact of works on the Tara River ecosystem. Specifically, it is expected that all development activities that alter the water quality and hydrological characteristics of the river will have temporary impact on the river and its habitats. However, far from being permanently destroyed and lost, this ecosystem will just need a recovery period. The occasional deterioration of the water quality of the Tara River will improve and reach almost complete natural values after the cessation of construction activities.

Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism and its relevant bodies and agencies will continue to carefully monitor the impacts of the construction of a motorway on downstream area.

- g) *Also noting the pressures from increasing visitor numbers and tourism development in the property, commends the State Party for initiating the process of revoking the Plan of Temporary Structures around Black Lake, and also encourages the State Party to consult with the Sustainable Tourism Programme of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre to develop a sustainable tourism management strategy for the property;*

The Plan of Temporary Structures which envisioned development of touristic accommodation near the Black Lake is revoked in April 2019, by Decision of the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism.

The Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism is in the process of drafting an Analysis of the Current Situation in Tourism of Montenegro, which will lead to developing a new or revision of the existing Tourism Development Strategy of Montenegro, for a period of next ten years. The Strategy will contain an analysis of the current state and achieved level of tourism development, comparative analysis of tourism of competing countries, advantages and disadvantages of tourism of Montenegro, goals of tourism development, vision of tourism development, selection of priority tourism products, proposal of tourism development policy and Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy. *Sustainable Tourism Programme of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre* will be taken into account in the process of development of this document, which is relevant not only for UNESCO areas, but the entire Montenegro.

In addition, the state party with its relevant authorities is preparing to launch the procedure of preparation of the proper Management plan which could integrate different policies in order to

produce a comprehensive strategy for the area. The plan will be based on the *Sustainable Tourism Programme of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre*.

- a) Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2020, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 44th session in 2020.

Following this Report, the National Commission of Montenegro for UNESCO will transmit to the World Heritage Centre all relevant documents which refer to any request or claim stated in this document or the Decision 43 COM 7B.87.

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During last year Montenegro had submitted to the World Heritage Centre two Information regarding the activities in the buffer zone of the property.

The National Commission of Montenegro for UNESCO had requested and accordingly transferred to the WHC information from the Ministry of Defense, on 11th of October. The state party received information from WHC that the document is sent to the advisory bodies and that it will be contacted if needed for further explanations.

The other information was dedicated to the initiative of project reconstruction of former Hotel Durmitor, submitted to the WHC on 05th of August. The state party received positive feedback and the project is ongoing.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

Authorities of Montenegro agree to put the Report on the website.

6. Signature of the Authority

Secretary General of the National Commission of Montenegro for UNESCO


Milica Nikolic

