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World Heritage

44 COM

AMENDMENT

Item of the Agenda	8B
Amended Draft Decision	44 COM 8B.31
Amendment submitted by the Delegation of....	UGANDA, MALI, SOUTH AFRICA, EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA, CHINA, ETHIOPIA, THAILAND, NIGERIA, SPAIN
Date of submission	27 th JULY 2021

TEXT

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents WHC/21/44.COM/8B and WHC/21/44.COM/INF.8B2,
2. Inscribes Ivindo National Park, Gabon, on the World Heritage List under criteria (ix) and (x);
- ~~2. Refers the nomination of Ivindo National Park, Gabon, back to the State Party, noting the strong potential for this nominated property to meet criteria (ix) and (x), in order to allow it, with the advice of IUCN and the World Heritage Centre, if requested, to:~~
 - ~~a) Complete and provide the new and revised management plan for Ivindo National Park, and to ensure that this plan:~~
 - ~~i. takes into account the protection of the potential Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property, including through proper inventories and a monitoring plan for its freshwater biodiversity and Caesalpinioideae forests,~~
 - ~~ii. is developed through a fully participatory process, including consultations with local communities both in the buffer zone and adjacent to Ivindo National Park,~~
 - ~~iii. is supported by secure, sufficient and sustainable funding for the management of Ivindo National Park,~~
 - ~~b) Ensure any potential infrastructure projects outside the nominated property will not negatively impact the potential Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property, and would be subject to prior assessment in line with the IUCN World Heritage advice note on Environmental Assessment,~~
 - ~~c) Increase the area of the buffer zone that would not be subject to logging regimes to the greatest extent possible, to reduce any edge effects on the natural systems inside the nominated property, and ensure that all concessions in the buffer zone of Ivindo~~

~~National Park have received FSC certification and that they will be strictly controlled and managed without any significant impacts on the potential Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property,~~

~~d) Ensure that any future internal zonation of Ivindo National Park is based on inventories of the biodiversity values and does not allow tourism infrastructure, such as hotels, to be located inside the park;~~

~~3. Expresses its appreciation for the designation of Ivindo National Park and the extensive efforts to date regarding the nomination of this site.~~

3. Takes note of the following provisional Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

Brief synthesis

Ivindo National Park (INP) is the main protected area representative of the forests of the interior plateaus of Gabon. It is characterized by the Ivindo and Djidji wetlands, which form a highly "picturesque" complex of waterfalls, rapids, and quiet reaches with deep black water, surrounded by intact forests. These forests include a great diversity of formations, including very old Caesalpinioideae forests, unique in Central Africa and in the entire Guinean-Congolese domain. This Park is thus the main viable natural refuge for rare, threatened or endemic species of the region of the Gabonese interior high lands, which constitutes one of the four zones, very different from each other, of the biogeographical province of Lower Guinea, very different from the forests of the Congolese region.

Criterion (ix):

The forest ecosystem of more than 300,000 ha (600,000-700,000 ha including peripheral areas) is of exceptional value because of its great diversity of forest formations, the presence of large areas of very old Caesalpinioideae forests and monodominant *Julbernardia pellegriniana* or *Eurypetalum batesi* forests, all of which are unique in Lower Guinea and in the whole of central Africa. The presence of the Langoué bay and grasslands identical to those of the inselbergs is not only exceptional in itself, but contributes greatly to the richness of the site.

The very old forests of Caesalpinioideae represent a characteristic stage of forest evolution in Central Africa, but have disappeared elsewhere in Lower Guinea. They do not occur elsewhere in the Guinean-Congolese region because the high diversity of Caesalpinioideae is unique to Lower Guinea. This forest ecosystem is also representative of the Lower Guinean or Atlantic forests of the Gabonese interior highlands, and more particularly of the Ivindo Landscape Area, which very likely forms a separate and very rich phytogeographic entity within Lower Guinea and the entire Central African region.

This intact forest ecosystem helps preserve the integrity of the black waters of the Ivindo, which are home to a swarm of some fifteen species of fish of the genus *Paramormyrops* (Mormyridae)-the only swarm of species found in rivers in the entire world and belonging to this family.

Finally, the Ipassa research station and its adjacent forests, specially designed with a network of research trials, represent a high point of eco-ethological field research. It is one of the rare stations located in the heart of the Guinean-Congolese rainforest and

has provided much of our knowledge about African rainforest species and ecosystems. The forests of the Ipassa highland thus represent a witness to biological research.

Criterion (x):

The intact forest ecosystem of INP and the Ivindo Landscape Area, with its diversity of habitats and, especially, its very old Caesalpinioideae forests, unique in west-central Africa and the entire Guinean-Congolese domain, is home to 161 plant species of high conservation value, 129 species endemic to Gabon and 35 species endemic to Ivindo. INP alone is home to 81 plant and 39 animal threatened species, including the western Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*), the common Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*) and the forest Elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*).

In terms of zoology, this ecosystem has 126 species of mammals, including seven species of primates that are endemic to Lower Guinea and several species that have not been found in any other national park in Gabon. In addition, the forest elephant population is relatively large and includes many males with very large tusks, which is becoming very rare in much of Central Africa. INP avifauna includes 190 (68%) of the 278 forest species native to the Guinean-Congolese region and 5 of the 6 species endemic to Lower Guinea. The entomofauna includes 528 species of butterflies (probably 800-1000), many of which appear to be restricted to very old-growth Caesalpinioideae forests. Among the 97 species endemic to Lower Guinea, 17 are endemic to Gabon.

Regarding the Kongou Falls, they are home to 7 species of Podostemaceae, very specialized plants, rare, very vulnerable and everywhere threatened by the construction of dams and the regulation of rivers. These seven species represent both 44% of the flora of Podostemaceae of Gabon and the four known genera of the country. Ivindo is also home to 45 species of fish endemic to Lower Guinea, 13 of which are endemic to Gabon. To these species, we must add the 10 species of the genus *Paramormyrops* (Mormyridae) in the process of description.

Integrity

INP covers an area of 300,000 ha (481,000 ha with its legal buffer zone). It is totally uninhabited and is about 90% absolutely intact. It is part of a larger forest ecosystem of nearly 2,000,000 ha, located between the towns of Makokou, Ovan, Booué and Lastoursville. The average human population density is about 2.5 inhabitants/km² and the areas outside the park are mostly under sustainable logging, more than half of which are Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified. Because of its size and the nature of its topography and hydrographic system, its phytogeographic and ecological gradients, and its connectivity with other protected areas-Minkébé National Park to the north and Mwagné National Park to the east - this ecosystem is able to withstand climatic changes, at least to those predicted by current assessments. In addition, in the framework of the land-use plan, it is located completely outside of the areas designed for agricultural or agro-industrial developments (palm oil tree).

Protection and management

The property benefits from long-term legal protection conferred by Decree 612/PR/MEFEPEPN of August 30, 2002, which classifies INP and sets out its boundaries

in Article 2. The width of the buffer zone of a national park is set at 5 km, in accordance with Article 77 of Law 16/2001 of December 31, 2001 on the Forestry Code in Gabon, and more specifically by Order 118/MEFEPEPN of March 1, 2004 on the regulation of forestry, mining, agricultural, aquacultural, hunting and tourism activities within a buffer zone. The property is protected as a national park (IUCN Category II).

INP is supported financially and technically by the government and some development partners, such as *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

Despite the fact that the boundaries of the property are clearly defined, known to the local populations and regulated, threats such as poaching, illegal logging and illegal fishing persist. Therefore, the fight against poaching is an unavoidable necessity. Additional adequate measures have been taken to eliminate these threats, notably by intensifying surveillance missions to ensure the protection of the property.

The only activity allowed outside of management, research and tourism is sustainable fishing, but this is strictly limited to a section of the Ivindo River, which forms the boundary of the national park, and to fishermen from the village of Loa-Loa. These activities are provided for by law, mainly by Law 16/2001 of December 31, 2001 on the Forestry Code in Gabon, Law No. 003/2007 of August 27, 2007 on national parks, and Order 118/MEFEPEPN of March 1, 2004 on the regulation of forestry, mining, agricultural, aquaculture, hunting and tourism activities within a buffer zone. It is important to ensure monitoring of the scale of these fishing activities, which is an ancient practice, to ensure that it remains sustainable in terms of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

INP is managed by Gabon's National Parks Agency (ANPN), established by Law No. 003/2007 of August 27, 2007 on national parks. Considerable and sustained efforts are made to ensure effective coordination and harmonization of policies and practices related to the management of the protected area. The property has a 2016 - 2020 management plan, renewed for two years by Ministerial decision n°028/MEFMEPCPAT of June 24, 2021, in view of the health context related to Covid-19. The updating process will take place during 2022.

Logging is selective: less than two trees are harvested per hectare. Logging is allowed in the buffer zone, provided that an environmental and social impact assessment proves that there is no negative impact on the ecosystem. All ten logging concessions have the status of Forest Concessions under Sustainable Development, which means that they are sustainably managed. Two of these concessions have FSC certification, Gabon is engaged in FSC certification process for the remaining concessions. Therefore, all the forest concessions constitute *de facto* a much larger buffer zone, which prevents outlying populations living along the roads from entering the forests near the national park.

Furthermore, in addition to its own resources and the contributions from other partners, As part of the process of Gabon's participations in the Central African Forest Initiative, the State Party has signed an agreement for funding from Norway of \$150 million over 10 years, corresponding to the payment of carbon emission reductions to which the PNI has contributed. A first payment of \$17 million has just been made, in June 2021.

4. Expresses its appreciation to the State Party for the significant efforts made so far for the conservation of INP and requests the reviews of the General Management Plan of the property by 2023 and ensure that this plan:
 - a) takes into account the protection of the potential Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property, including undertaking biodiversity inventories and a monitoring plan for the biodiversity of its freshwater and Caesalpinioideae forests
 - b) Is supported by secure, adequate and sustainable funding for the management of the property.
5. Also recommends that the State Party ensures that any infrastructure or development projects, outside the nominated property, do not adversely affect the potential Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property and are subject to prior assessment in accordance with the IUCN World Heritage Advisory Note: Environmental Assessment
6. Further recommends that all concessions in the buffer zone of INP should meet the provisions of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification and strictly controlled and managed without significant impact on Outstanding Universal Value of the property
7. Encourages the State party to further its efforts in enhancing the management, technical and financial capacity for the effective conservation of the property
- ~~4.8.~~ Requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre by 1 December 2024, a report on the implementation of the above recommendations for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 48th session.