



IUCN
Rue Mauverney 28
1196 Gland
Switzerland

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

H.E. Mr Elman ABDULLAYEV
Ambassador
Permanent Delegate
Permanent Delegation of Azerbaijan to UNESCO
UNESCO House
Offices B.12.29 1
rue Miollis
75732 Paris Cedex 15
France

H. E. Mr Ahmad Jalali
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Delegate
Permanent Delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran to
UNESCO
Maison de l'UNESCO
1, rue Miollis
75732 PARIS Cedex 15
France

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• **IUCN Evaluation of Hyrcanian Forests [extension of Hyrcanian Forests (Iran (Islamic Republic of)), inscribed in 2019, criterion (ix) and renomination under criterion (x)] – Nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List**

Dear Ambassadors,

Further to the above nomination to the World Heritage List, I am writing with information on 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.

The IUCN World Heritage technical evaluation missions to the extension nomination of the Hyrcanian Forests World Heritage property were undertaken by Mr Oliver Avramoski and Mr Jan Woollhead in the period from 25 to 30 October 2021. The evaluators greatly appreciated the excellent support, organisation and co-operation provided by your authorities in the preparation and implementation of the mission, and the kind welcome throughout the missions. Please convey our sincere thanks to all of the officials, scientists and contributors that assisted the missions.

Following the field evaluation missions, 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 2021, following which the IUCN evaluation report will be issued to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. At its meetings held on 6, 10, 13 and 15 December 2021, the IUCN Panel examined in detail above-mentioned nomination, including reports of field evaluators and desktop reviews of 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 2022. The Panel wishes to clarify a number of points regarding this nomination as set out below.

1. The Panel recalled Decision **43 COM 8B.4** of the World Heritage Committee noting the potential for this property to also meet criterion (x), and that in this same decision the Committee recommended the State Party of the Islamic Republic of Iran to undertake significant further work to complete species inventories and confirm species composition and population conservation status within each of the component parts. The Panel noted that such information is mostly not included in the nomination dossier for the renomination and extension of the existing World Heritage property. Thus the Panel would be grateful if the States Parties could provide supplementary information in order to confirm the further work which

has been undertaken following the Committee's decision, and to summarize in full the latest results available on species inventories, species composition and population conservation status within each of the existing and newly nominated component parts. It is requested that these analyses present information separately for each component part, and ensure that the information referred to is located inside the relevant boundaries of the component part. This should include the precise distribution data on strictly restricted endemics and globally threatened species in the existing and nominated component parts. The States Parties may wish to summarize this information in a table.

2. Regarding the transnational management of the nominated property, and further to Decision **43 COM 8B.4** of the World Heritage Committee, the Panel would be grateful if the States Parties would indicate their willingness to commit to the following necessary requirements:
 - a) establishing an overarching framework for the development of a coordinated and collaborative management system that brings together, in a coordinated mechanism, the various institutions from both States Parties responsible for the management and conservation of the nominated component parts.
 - b) developing a comprehensive management plan for the nominated property as a whole, that harmonizes conservation, protection, management and monitoring of the nominated property.
 - c) ensuring adequate funding from both States Parties for nature conservation and biodiversity monitoring in the existing and nominated component parts.
 - d) ensuring ecological connectivity between existing and nominated component parts, including addressing any artificial barriers that are in place.
3. The Panel noted that a settlement is included in the nominated component part of Khanbulan, in Azerbaijan, and would appreciate, further to paragraph 123 of the *Operational Guidelines*, if the State Party of Azerbaijan could provide more details on
 - a) traditional rights and use of local communities in the nominated area, and any formal agreements or arrangements with the local communities, also in regard to the possible inclusion in a World Heritage property and their free, prior and informed consent;
 - b) the role of the local communities in the management of Hirkan National Park and the conservation of the nominated area;
4. IUCN would be grateful to receive a map of the boundaries of the nominated component parts of Dangyaband, Khanbulan and Istisuchay Valley, and their buffer zone in relation to the boundaries of Hirkan National Park, including their respective areas (in hectare) and information on the regulation of any parts of the buffer zone located outside Hirkan National Park.
5. The Panel noted concerns that the two component parts in the Islamic Republic of Iran appear to have significant integrity challenges in terms of the application of criterion (ix), notably due to the scale of recent changes to these component parts, from which the ecosystems in these components are recovering. IUCN would therefore be grateful if the State Party of the Islamic Republic of Iran would confirm if there is additional information to provide regarding if, and how, these two component parts (Dizmar West and Dizmar East) respond to the expectations of criterion (ix).

We would appreciate your response to the above points as soon as possible, in order to facilitate the evaluation process, but **no later than 28 February 2022**, 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 all completed and submitted supplementary information to both the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Mr Alessandro Balsamo (a.balsamo@unesco.org) and IUCN Headquarters, Mr Clemens Küpper (clemens.kupper@iucn.org) would also be greatly appreciated.

Taking into account your response, IUCN will formulate its final recommendation to the World Heritage Committee, which will meet in Kazan, Russian Federation from 19 to 30 June 2022.

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 conference call.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Clemens Küpper, Evaluations & Operations Officer (clemens.kupper@iucn.org) if you have any questions regarding this request, or if you would wish to arrange a conference 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'TB', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Tim Badman
Director - World Heritage Programme

cc. National Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan for UNESCO, Mr Elnur Sultanov, Secretary-General
Iranian National Commission for UNESCO, Dr Hojatollah Ayoubi, Acting Secretary General
UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Ms Anatole-Gabriel, Mr Feng Jing and Mr Alessandro Balsamo
IUCN Eastern Europe and Central Asia Office, Mr Boris Erg, Regional Director
IUCN Regional Office for West Asia, Mr Hany El Shaer, Regional Director