



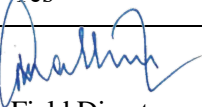
**FORMAT FOR THE SUBMISSION OF
STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORTS
BY THE STATES PARTIES**

(in compliance with Paragraph 169 of the *Operational Guidelines*)

MANAS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY (INDIA) (N 338)

1. Executive Summary of the report

[Note: each of the sections described below should be summarized. The maximum length of the executive summary is 1 page.]

Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (India) (N 338)	
Response to Decision 44 COM 7B.185 of the World Heritage Committee, 2021	<p>Para 4: Anti-poaching measures and scaling up such efforts are an ongoing process which have helped contain illegalities to a significant extent.</p> <p>Para 5: The matter of agricultural encroachment has been taken up at a political level and status quo is being maintained with no fresh encroachments</p> <p>Para 6: Habitat management strategy in Manas is being undertaken as per prescriptions in Mans Tiger Conservation Plan with scientific basis.</p> <p>Para 7: Field-level cooperation between India and Bhutan in Manas is an ongoing effort.</p> <p>Para 8: Any revised proposal for extension of property needs a holistic approach with political will involving rehabilitating encroached areas as well as considering addition areas to be included.</p> <p>Para 9: The matter of HEP in Bhutan needs to be taken up at the level of the Government of India following due diplomatic processes.</p> <p>Para 10: The issue of EIA and EMP of Mangdechchu HEP is within the jurisdiction of Bhutan.</p>
Other current conservation issues	Eco-restoration of Mothanguri; immunisation buffer along southern boundary of Manas; exploring carbon finance; and securing funding from the Government of India.
Any potential major alterations, restorations, construction, etc	None.
Public access	Yes
Signature of authority	 Field Director, Manas Tiger Project, Bodoland Territorial Council Government of Assam Barpeta Road - 781315, Assam. India Tel : +91-3666-261413 (O); +91-3666-260251 (R) Email : fd.manastp@gmail.com

2. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

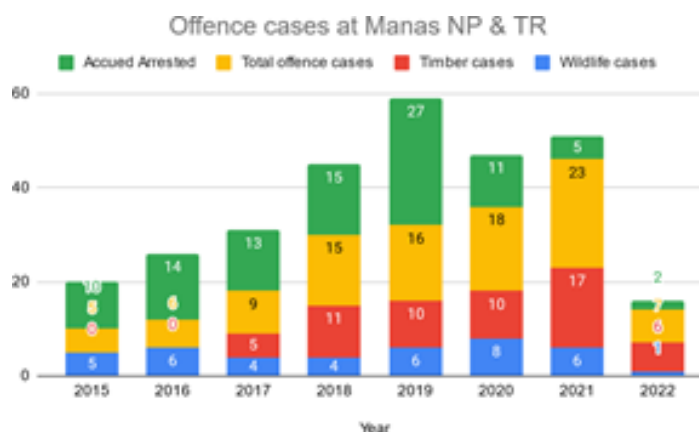
[Note: The State(s) Party(ies) is/are requested to address the most recent Decision of the World Heritage Committee for this property, paragraph by paragraph.]

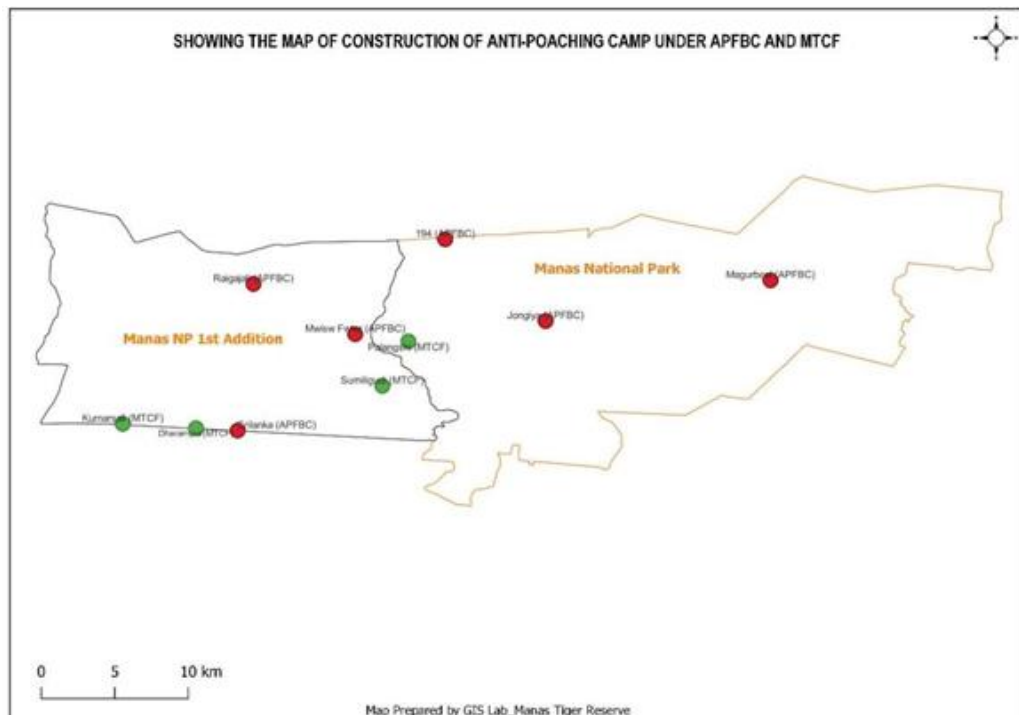
The World Heritage Committee vide Decision 44 COM 7B.185 adopted at its 44th Session held in 2021, requested the State Party of India to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 2022, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the recommendations, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 46th Session in 2023. In this context, response of the State Party of India is provided below.

PARA-4: Notes with concern that poaching and other wildlife crime still persist within the property, and requests the State Party to continue implementing anti-poaching measures and scaling up such efforts, where possible and necessary;

Anti-poaching measures and scaling up such efforts are an ongoing process which have helped contain illegalities to a significant extent.

Strengthening protection: Towards the west of the park, Panbari range bore the brunt of the ethno-political conflict in the region till as late as 2016. As a consequence, some of the anti-poaching camps were abandoned and had not been occupied. Over a period of time, miscreants had started taking advantage of the situation. To strengthen anti-poaching, 2 camps namely Phalangsi and Simlibeel were repaired from the Manas Tiger Conservation Foundation (MTCF) and activated by deployment of staff. In addition, two new camps shall be coming up at location 194 and Mwsupathar (Badaribeel) to augment protection under the Assam Project on Forestry and Biodiversity Conservation (APFBC). Kuklung Range, notified as 1st addition to the Manas National Park, was brought under control of the Field Directorate in October 2021. The area was never managed from the wildlife point of view and requires significant infrastructure development to carry out area domination on a continuous basis. Of essence here is the strengthening of the southern boundary with anti-poaching camps as well as solar fencing. Towards this end 2 camps which had been abandoned along the southern boundary are being renovated namely Dharampur and Kumarsali under the MTCF, wherein staff has already been deployed in the former. Further, 2 new camps under APFBC shall be coming up at Raigajali and SriLanka in Kuklung range for which work orders have recently been issued. Solar fencing has been proposed under BTC SOPD, which however, is yet to be sanctioned. One APC shall be coming up at Jongiya and one at Magurbeel in Kahitama beat and Bhuyanpara Range respectively which are sensitive locations, under the APFBC.





Capacity-building and Sensitisation: Being an important activity vis-a-vis wildlife conservation, several steps have been taken to capacity build and sensitize different sections of people:

- (i) Forest frontline: Training in the latest digital platforms developed by the GoI for wildlife monitoring has been imparted and a few have been selected as Master Trainers. From Android based data collection apps to deployment of camera traps in the field, this is an ongoing initiative. In addition, training for rhino estimation, where Block counting is done, has been provided
- (ii) Paramilitary: Paramilitary, esp. the SSB has been sensitized in wildlife laws as some of their personnel were found indulging in acts which are violative of extant rules and regulations. Besides Dos and Don'ts in a forest were also apprised to their personnel. Officials from Tiger Reserve management are periodically attending Lead Intelligence Agency (LIA) meetings for coordination.
- (iii) Non-Governmental Organizations: NGOs and other conservation partners have been clearly briefed about the requirements of Manas and the need for indulging in formulating novel and innovative approaches rather than wasting precious donor money in routine activities which the management can very well perform on their own.

(iv) IFS officers: Indian Forest Service Officers, as part of the Post Graduate Diploma in wildlife management from the Wildlife Institute of India, conducted their term paper exercise at Manas herein they worked upon different thematic areas and generated valuable data and information for park management.

(v) Range Officer Trainees: Ranger trainees from the Andhra Pradesh Forest Academy were apprised about the best practices at Manas on their visit here

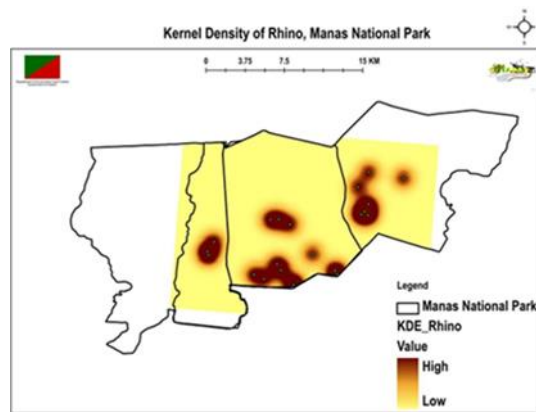


Annual Wildlife Monitoring (Phase-IV): Consequent to capacity building of staff in state-of-the-art data collection protocols using an Android based mobile application, transects were carried out on elephant back by the frontline staff of Manas to collect evidences of tigers, co-predators, prey and habitat. Data so collected was analysed using a software and the results obtained were forwarded for validation via the Chief Wildlife Warden, Assam to the NTCA Tiger Cell at WII, Dehradun, which is the nodal agency for such works in the country. Besides camera traps were laid as per protocol of the NTCA to get a pulse on the minimum number of tigers in Manas. The transects were conducted in a holistic manner across all ranges and amounted to an effort of 400 kms, which has never been done earlier due to challenges arising out of the ethno-political conflict and management which could not be institutionalised. For the first time, baseline data has been generated on all important charismatic and keystone species in Manas, which were hitherto being addressed in an ad hoc manner with methods varying in their approaches. This shall serve as a baseline for all future assessments of wildlife population trends. As a collateral benefit, frontline staff has been empowered and their confidence has increased in this mandate of the Forest Department.



14th Assam Rhino Estimation: The 14th Assam Rhino Estimation was conducted on April 1 and 2, 2022 which revealed that the rhino population had increased to 50, as compared to 34 during the last estimation in 2018. For the first time, Manas has compared two scientific population estimation methods with respect to rhinos as instructed by the MoEFCC, GoI, namely total counts and Distance sampling, both of which have given similar results.

Pygmy Hog Reintroduction: Ten captive-bred pygmy hogs have been released in Manas National Park of Assam, India on June 8 and 10, 2022. This is the third time Pygmy hogs have been reintroduced in Manas after the successful release of 14 Pygmy Hogs in 2020 and 12 Pygmy Hogs in 2021. As the species is near extinction, in 1995, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Jersey, UK partnered with Forest Department, Government of Assam, IUCN Wild Pig Specialist Group & Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt. of India formed Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP). A total of 36 Pygmy Hogs have been released in Manas under the said programme.



Rhino estimation



Pygmy hog reintroduction

PARA-5: Reiterates its concern that agricultural encroachment remains a serious threat to the integrity of the property, despite the State Party's actions, and also requests the State Party to strengthen its efforts to identify long-term solutions to address this issue and respect the social, economic and cultural rights of indigenous peoples and local communities and improve their livelihoods, in line with the 2015 Policy Document on the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention;

The matter has been taken up with the Bodoland Territorial Council, but it is yet to see light of the day owing to socio-political concerns involving rights of indigenous communities. It is unlikely to be resolved at an early date and status quo is being maintained with no fresh encroachments.

Revitalising Eco-Development Committees: Out of 48 Eco Development Committees that were constituted under Manas Tiger Reserve, only 10 were functional while validity of the rest 38 had expired. Initiative has been taken to revitalize the remaining EDCs and consultations are being held with them to arrive at activities which shall help villages under the EDCs especially in respect of alternative livelihoods and mitigating human wildlife conflict. Consequent to completion of these discussions, a detailed plan of action shall be submitted under the Man and Biosphere Programme to the Government of India for financial assistance. We shall be soliciting assistance of conservation partners for formulating/revising micro plans wherever required.

Eco-Tourism Initiatives: In order to benefit the local communities who are engaged in eco-tourism activities, following steps have been implemented:

- a) Private vehicle entry into the park has been completely stopped to the benefit of the local jeep safari association
- b) Further, private vehicle entry for night stay has also been stopped to the benefit of the local jeep safari association
- c) Night stays have been regulated and is proposed to be stopped due to its damaging effects on the environment as described above, to the benefit of local resort operators
- d) A proposal to convert the upper Forest IB into a “Manas Heritage Centre” cum “Beki River View” is already in discussion with the BTR government as the building is under major repair renovation
- e) An Interpretation Centre for Conservation education has already been designated at Mothanguri as well as a Visitor Centre at Bansbari
- f) A website for Manas has been launched (www.manasnptr.in) wherein online ticket bookings have been made active to minimize cash handling as well help eco tourists.



Eco-Development Committee consultation



Manas website for ecotourism

PARA-6: Welcomes the progress made by the State Party towards the finalization of an Action Plan for sustainable management of the grassland-woodland ecosystems and the implementation of a scientific habitat management protocol on the ground, and urges the State Party to finalize and implement the Action Plan as soon as possible in order to prevent further spread of invasive species, as noted by the Committee in Decision 43 COM 7B.7;

Habitat management strategy in Manas is being undertaken as per prescriptions in Manas Tiger Conservation Plan through regulated fire regime, weed eradication, management of woody species, grazing management, water development, etc. Scientific basis for action plan includes objectives to identify the grassland sites for restoration and management, provide guidelines/principles for restoration/enhancement and conservation, monitor the health of the grasslands regularly, and encourage and support community participation in the conservation of grassland habitat.

PARA-7: Also commends the States Parties of India and Bhutan for their enhanced cooperation to better protect flagship species moving across national boundaries between the property and the adjacent Royal Manas National Park, and further requests the States Parties to further strengthen their cooperation;

Field-level cooperation and park-to-park interaction between India and Bhutan is an ongoing effort across the Manas landscape between the two countries.

PARA-8: Reiterates the importance of the conservation of the larger landscape for the integrity and long-term viability of the property, notably to increase its adaptability to climate change, and reiterates its encouragement to the State Party to:

a) Submit a revised proposal for the extension of the property that does not include any established cropland or permanently encroached areas within the nominated property and to include full details on the relationships with stakeholders and/or rights-holders related to the cropland areas within Manas National Park,

Owing to socio-political concerns of the indigenous communities inhabiting the encroached areas, submitting a revised proposal involving just parcels of land shall be a piecemeal approach with no significant conservation achievement. A holistic approach involving rehabilitating encroached areas as well as considering the 1st addition area to be included can be considered when political will to vacate encroached areas is obtained.

b) Conduct, with the State Party of Bhutan, a joint feasibility study on a possible transboundary extension of the property, in line with the aforementioned decisions;

The joint feasibility study can be conducted subject to clearances from the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and cannot be undertaken at the level of the Field Directorate. Lead has to be taken by the Government of Bhutan in this regard.

PARA 9: Deeply regrets that, despite its repeated requests since 2012, the State Party of Bhutan has not provided information on the status of the Mangdechhu hydroelectric project nor submitted a copy of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to address the project's potentially significant impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), notes with utmost concern that the project has already been completed, and also deeply regrets that the State Party of India did not inform the Committee of the project prior to its implementation, despite the provisions of Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;

This matter is beyond the scope of the Field Directorate and needs to be taken up at the level of the Government of India following due diplomatic processes.

PARA 10: Also urges the States Parties of India and Bhutan to: a) Submit as soon as possible a copy of the EIA for the Mangdechhu hydroelectric project to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN, which should include an assessment of the project's impact on the property's OUV, notably its integrity, b) Provide details on the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) and the measures taken to ensure that any impact on the OUV is being avoided, for review by IUCN, e) Report on the implementation of the EMP and the monitoring of potential impacts on the OUV of the property;

This issue is beyond the scope of this office as the project is within the jurisdiction of Bhutan.

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

[Note: this includes conservation issues which are not mentioned in the Decision of the World Heritage Committee or in any information request from the World Heritage Centre]

Eco-Restoration of Mothanguri: Being in the core/critical tiger habitat of Manas Tiger Reserve, Mothanguri is an eco-tourist attraction, owing to its scenic beauty. However, the area was crowded with buildings, majority of which were not in a state of use, unrepairable and fit for being decommissioned. After obtaining necessary permission from the CHD, Forests, BTR, these building have been dismantled and the area is being cleared of all debris, so that the area is made available for use by wildlife. Further, night stays which were currently ongoing had caused a lot of plastic pollution in the core area of the tiger reserve, which is a potential health hazard for wild animals. A large quantity of the same has been removed and disposed outside and steps have been initiated to stop night stays for the general public because of the following reasons:

- a) Section 38 V (4) (i) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 requires that core areas/critical tiger habitats of National Parks are required to be kept inviolate for the purposes of tiger conservation.
- b) Tourism in tiger reserves is to be governed by Part B of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (Normative Standards for Tourism and Project Tiger) Guidelines, 2012, issued under Section 38 O (1) (c) of the said Act, clause 2.2.12 of which prescribes that permanent tourist facilities located inside core or critical tiger habitats which are being used for wildlife tourism shall be phased out in a decided time frame.
- c) Order of the Hon'ble Apex Court dated July 5, 2018 in IA nos. 2354-2355 in Writ Petition (Civil) 202/1995 had opined that *"Forest Rest Houses/Inspection Bungalows are facilities created for camping of forest officers primarily for discharge of their duties connected with conservation, protection and management of forests and wildlife"* and *"The Forest Department should make every effort to retain the basic plan and elevation of old FRHs/IBs, many of which are heritage buildings, while making improvement/addition to these buildings"*
- d) In 1991 itself, in an article titled *"Manas-a Monograph"* authored by former Director Manas, Shri S. Debroy, in his capacity as Addl. IGF in the Ministry of Environment and Forests, GoI, published in Tiger Paper, mentioned that *"it was planned to move tourist accommodation outside the core zone so that tourists can visit the area only during daylight hours"*
- e) 16 Forest frontline personnel are deployed for works they are unexpected to perform.

- f) There are also reports that tourists create a ruckus as well as wander in the night and not heed the advice of forest personnel and put their lives at risk, accountability for which is liable to be fixed on Forest personnel.
- g) Tourists visiting Mothanguri are not exposed to the wildlife and ecological significance of the place due to lack of any information. In addition, only those with a night stay permission can enjoy the views from the Mothanguri Upper IB and not everyone can avail the said facility
- h) The Upper IB is currently under renovation and may be converted to a Heritage Centre showcasing the history of Manas as well as have a river view point where eco tourists can sit in during daytime
- i) Only 10-12% of the total revenue earned by Manas comes from night stays

Further, an 8-room inspection bungalow built in contravention of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and NTCA guidelines referred above from 2017-2021, has now been designated as an Interpretation Centre for Conservation Education in accordance with provisions of the statutory Tiger Conservation Plan by the BTR Government.

That stopping night stays will have the following advantages:

- Local resort owners will witness a rise in occupancy, which shall contribute to the local economy
- All tourists shall be able to avail the breath-taking views from the Mothanguri Upper IB
- The facility shall provide an insight into the history of Manas and serve as a medium of conservation education
- Plastic waste can be significantly reduced in the core area
- Forest personnel can be deployed in the field, which shall be beneficial especially in light of the existing manpower crunch
- Eco tourism can conform to the law, violation of which will make the tiger reserve authority liable for penal action.

Another positive step taken by the BTR Government has been to stop vehicles from Bhutan from traversing the core area of Manas after consultation with their Consulate, which was informed by the Hon'ble CEM, BTR to the Hon'ble Forest Minister, ACS Forests and PCCF and HoFF in a meeting held on July 12, 2022 at Kokrajhar.

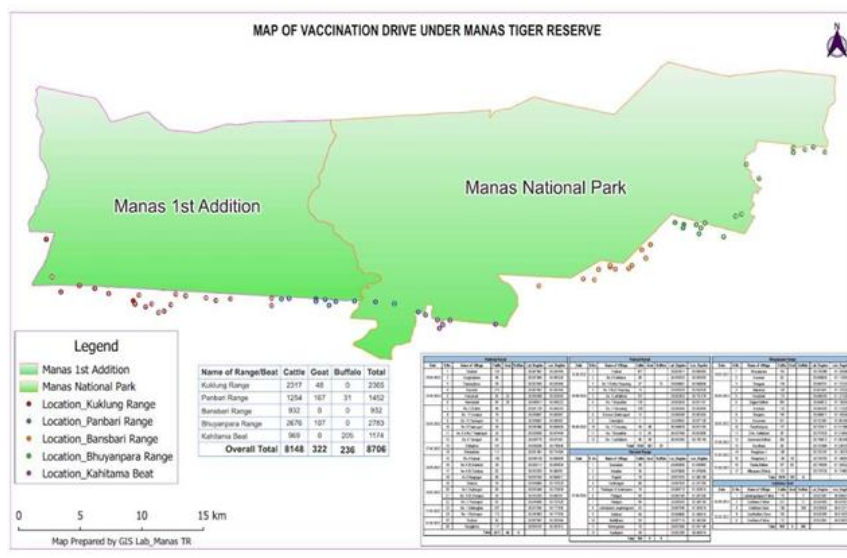


Plastic heap at Mothanguri



Mothanguri Forest IB with new roof

Creation of an immunization buffer along the southern boundary of Manas: Keeping in view the concept of “One -Health”, vaccination of livestock against prevalent diseases has been carried out in the southern fringe of Manas so as to reduce the likelihood of disease transmission from livestock to wildlife and vice versa. 8706 cattle have been immunized with support from the BTR Animal Husbandry Department and conservation partners WTI, WWF-India and PHCP. Vaccination for dogs against rabies and canine distemper are currently being planned as both diseases are emerging threats for wildlife especially tigers.



Exploring Carbon Finance: After approval from the Chief Wildlife Warden, Assam, the Manas Tiger Conservation Foundation (MTCF) has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and The Energy Research Institute (TERI) to tap carbon markets across the world to assure support for conservation efforts at Manas. The scheme aims to leverage the carbon sequestered by the forests of Manas and use REDD+ mechanism under Verified Carbon Standards (VCS) to certify and market them through an independent carbon credit transaction agency. The funds accrued shall be used for wildlife conservation, fringe communities, and mitigating human wildlife conflict. The ground work in Manas shall be done by TERI who have been provided with baseline data about the Tiger Reserve to work upon and field work is likely to commence from September onwards. If the concept materializes, there is potential to ensure continued assistance for conservation at Manas, at no cost to either the BTR or State Government.



Securing funding from Government of India: Viewing the commitment of the frontline staff of Manas towards wildlife monitoring protocols and successful completion of the latest Annual wildlife monitoring, the NTCA has provided a grant of Rs. 80 lakhs for procuring camera traps to strengthen the Manas administration with the intention to institutionalize state of the art wildlife monitoring processes in day-to-day management without compromising data which until now was not being handled at the level of the Field Directorate. This had resulted in inaccurate and incomplete datasets, analysis which was of meagre relevance to park management. Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger, the tentative allocation for Manas has been enhanced from Rs. 470 lakhs to Rs. 850 lakhs after continuous engagement with GoI. Though yet to be sanctioned because of procedural delays arising out of frequent changes in the rule position by the DoE, GoI, once approved, this shall help clear liabilities which have accrued over the last two years.

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.**

None.

5. **Public access to the state of conservation report**

[Note: this report will be uploaded for public access on the World Heritage Centre's State of conservation Information System (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>). Should your State Party request that the full report should not be uploaded, only the 1-page executive summary provided in point (1.) above will be uploaded for public access].

Yes

6. **Signature of the Authority**



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