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H. E. Mr Henok Teferra Shawl
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25 January 2023

IUCN Evaluation of Bale Mountains National Park – Interim Report and request for supplementary information

Dear Ambassador,

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 Bale Mountains National Park was undertaken by Mr John Zulu from 16 to 25 October 2022. The evaluator 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 2023, following which the IUCN evaluation report will be issued to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. 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 State Party's efforts in relation to this nomination, and will be discussing the nomination again at its second meeting, to be held in March 2023. At this stage, the Panel took note of the significant natural values outlined in the nomination under criteria (vii) and (x). The Panel also appreciated the detailed account provided in the nomination and during the field evaluation mission regarding issues related to the integrity of the nominated property, and the challenges that it faces. It noted that a number of significant responses are being proposed by the State Party, and its partners, but also that many of the related strategies, and activities, are still in the course of either planning and/or implementation and will require further time before they are completed. This provides a considerable challenge, given that many of these issues are normally expected to be resolved prior to a nomination being made, and that many of these interventions appear critical to supporting the livelihoods, and related rights, of local people. The Panel further noted that the nomination was originally submitted for the 2021-2022 nomination cycle, thus there may be a need to document the current information on a number of issues.

The Panel would appreciate further and specific information on the following points:

1. Grazing and settlements in relation to the nominated property

Please could the State Party provide confirmed and up-to-date information regarding:

- a) the status of the implementation of the Interim Settlement and Grazing Management Programme, referred to in the nomination, and its 3-year Action Plan presented in the General Management Plan;
- b) the timelines for the development or status of implementation of the Grazing Pressure Reduction Strategy and by when, and through what measures, uncontrolled livestock grazing is expected to be managed and reduced;
- c) the status of the benefit sharing mechanisms for local communities, and, in as much detail as available, the results reviewed and reported on.

2. Envisaged relocation of people in relation to the nominated property

The Panel noted that the nomination document and management plan refer to possible relocation of people, and that the field mission discussed planned relocation during its visit to the nominated property. Relocation of people is clearly a sensitive issue, and it is essential that any potential relocation would follow a rights-based approach that safeguards both individual and collective civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of affected persons throughout all phases. This requires a series of conditions and safeguards to be met, including in relation to 1) no forced relocation; 2) relocation should be properly justified; 3) all communities concerned should agree in full to the relocation and its conditions, through proper consultative and fair process; 4) the communities should be better off after the relocation, more secure; and 5) all the above should be demonstrable, transparent, and accountable. In this respect, the Panel notes the 10-year objective of the Interim Settlement and Grazing Management Programme that “Permanent settlers in [Bale Mountain National Park] are collaboratively relocated using best practice and with no overall impact on their well-being” (see General Management Plan, p. 43).

Please could the State Party kindly provide a full and up-to-date statement on the current and intended relocation of people in relation to the nominated property, and including details regarding:

- a) Justification beyond the reasons provided in the nomination (ecosystem services and biodiversity of the Bale Mountains; livelihoods of future generations) for considering the relocation of people, including:
 - i. details on the social impact assessment (see p.4 of the General Management Plan 2017-2027) or other kind of relevant assessment to disaggregate the affected people, and to determine the implications of the relocation for the affected people, and if yes, what the key outcomes and recommendations are, and if these recommendations have been shared with the affected communities in the nominated property and at the planned destination,
 - ii. if the affected communities and relevant rightsholders and stakeholders have the capacities, resources, technical knowledge and political will needed to implement the recommendations,
 - iii. if gender-related considerations have been taken into account in exchanges with communities, in line with best practice;
- b) Confirmation and evidence on consultations held with affected communities since the consultations held in preparation of the General Management Plan 2017-2027 (see p.181-182), and their results, including:
 - i. evidence that the free, prior and informed consent to the relocations and their relevant terms has been given by all affected communities, and whether the communities are enabled to participate in decisions on when, where, and how the envisaged relocations shall occur,
 - ii. if communities in the destination areas have been consulted about the impact of the planned relocation, and if appropriate measures have been taken to ensure that they will not be negatively impacted, with relevant detailed information on this matter;
 - iii. if effective mechanisms have been put in place to collect, receive and act on feedback from the affected communities, with relevant detailed information on this matter;
 - iv. if the timeframes presented in the General Management Plan 2017-2027 have the flexibility to react to unexpected developments, with relevant detailed information on this matter;
- c) Details on any in-kind, non-monetary or monetary compensations, as appropriate for loss of assets and for loss of access to assets, as noted in the Interim Settlement and Grazing Management Programme that have been provided, and/or that will be provided, and how the new situation of any relocated communities compares to their situation(s) before their relocation, including
 - i. how adequate relocation funds are available and if not, by when they shall be secured;
 - ii. how relocated communities receive support until their livelihoods are set up in their new place;
 - iii. how relocated communities are expected to be better off after the relocation than before and if so, how this shall be achieved;
 - iv. take into account any cultural, symbolic and religious relationships between communities and nature, and identify activities to sustain those relationships;
 - v. how it will be ensured that the relocated persons enjoy the same rights and freedoms and are treated equally as other persons in the new location.

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 2023**, 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. Therefore, we kindly ask your authorities 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.

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.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your kind cooperation in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, and I remain,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Badman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tim Badman
Director World Heritage

cc. Ethiopian National Office for UNESCO, Dr Ms Bezawit Girma, Secretary-General
UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Mr Muhammad Muhammad Juma, Mr Guy Debonnet and Mr Alessandro Balsamo
IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, Mr Luther Anukur, Regional Director