



IUCN
Rue Mauverney 28
1196 Gland
Switzerland

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

H. E. Mr Massimo Riccardo
Ambassador
Permanent Delegate
Permanent Delegation of Italy to UNESCO
Délégation d'Italie auprès des OOI - UNESCO 50
Rue de Varenne
75007 Paris
France

26 January 2023

IUCN Evaluation of Evaporitic Karst and Caves of Northern Apennines – Interim Report and request for additional 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 mission to the Evaporitic Karst and Caves of Northern Apennines was undertaken by Ms Gordana Beltram from 21 to 28 November 2022. The evaluator greatly appreciated the excellent support, organisation, flexibility 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 mission, 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. The Panel would be very grateful to your authorities for further information regarding the nomination under criterion (viii), and related integrity and protection and management requirements, as set out below:

A. Values proposed under criterion (viii)

Regarding criterion (viii), the Panel does not consider that the comparative analysis as currently presented is sufficient to confirm the stated potential to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value. In particular, the star system adopted for assessment and differentiation of sites (see p.107-113 including tables on p.108-109 and p. 112-113 of the nomination document) does not provide for clear analysis and comparison. Thus:

1. The Panel would be grateful if the State Party could provide the full comparative analysis that underpins the analysis presented in the nomination dossier, if available, and explain (a) the benchmarks and rationales for determining the selection of the different categories of significance (1 star – present, 2 stars – significant, 3 stars – very significant), (b) the scoring system adopted for each category, (c) the relative significance of each category in defining potential OUV on the basis of qualitative and semi-quantitative comparisons, (d) the means by which comparative judgements are reached based on the analysis and (e) the extent to which international peer review of the overall comparative methodology has been undertaken. The Panel would be grateful for this to be explained both in relation to the comparison of the nominated property with other locations globally, including the Sivas Basin of Central Anatolia in Turkey, and also in relation to the selection of component parts – for instance, nominated component parts 2, 6 and 7 have been included although the comparative analysis appears to indicate that the attributes of the other nominated component parts are more significant than those of component parts 2, 6 and 7.

2. External desk reviewers have expressed different views regarding the significance of the nominated property in relation to accepted scientific frameworks for classifying evaporitic karst. Could the State Party please provide an expanded scientific response, including references, regarding the correspondence of the nominated property to the frameworks provided in the relevant IUCN Thematic Studies (Williams, P. (2008). World Heritage Caves and Karst and Mc Keever, P.J. and Narbonne, G.M. (2021). Geological World Heritage: a revised global framework for the application of criterion (viii) of the World Heritage Convention), building on the information provided in the nomination document (p.110). This should set out to what extent the nominated property, as a stand-alone site, could be considered as the most significant option for addressing the remaining gap that was identified in the representation of caves and karst on the World Heritage List;
3. In line with the above, the Panel recommends providing more details on the attributes listed for criterion (viii) on p.108-109 and p.112-113 of the nomination document. Desk reviewers noted for instance the diversity of chemical deposits and minerals associated with the gypsum caves of the nominated property as important attributes, but that precise figures and sources underpinning this claim are not provided in the comparison of the nominated property with the world's gypsum caves and the related star-rating.

B. Integrity

4. Regarding the integrity of the nominated property, the Panel would be grateful if the State Party could:
 - a) describe, in brief, the caves and the evaporate outcrops that are not located within the nominated property, but located either within or outside the buffer zones, and explain the importance of these geo-sites (see Annex 1 – Detailed Geological Map of the nomination dossier);
 - b) indicate the potential (and the State Party's willingness to consider), in future, merging currently separate nominated component parts and expanding the buffer zones of the nominated property to improve connectivity and to cover all proposed attributes;

C. Protection and Management

5. Regarding the protection of the nominated property, the Panel would be grateful if the State Party could please provide
 - a) a succinct clarification to what extent the protection of the geo-sites is integrated in the protected area law(s) and to what extent the protective designations specifically serve the protection of geological values;
 - b) a map, and GIS shapefiles for each nominated component part if available, showing an overlay of key attributes (see Annex 1 – Detailed Geological Map of the nomination dossier) and all protective designations that serve the protection of the geological values of the nominated property;
 - c) a map clarifying prohibited activities (see p. 159-161 of the nomination document) in relation to the nominated component parts and buffer zones;
6. Regarding the management of the nominated property, the Panel would be grateful if the State Party could please
 - a) indicate the timeframe for the establishment of the proposed management structure (see Annex – Project of the Overall Management Strategy);
 - b) confirm that the Monte Tonde quarry will not be expanded. Please also re-confirm the latest information on the status of the quarry and detail the timeframe envisaged for closing the quarry, including information on any transition programmes for quarry workers and any rehabilitation plans for the affected areas;
 - c) provide the zoning map for the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, which overlaps with the nominated component parts 1, 2 and 3, including a brief summary of linkages between the management of the Biosphere Reserve and the nominated property, if any;
 - d) indicate the expertise of the Carabinieri Forestale and protected area staff, specifically related to geo-conservation;
 - e) indicate through a table the current and planned funding and staffing, specifically for the potential World Heritage status and geo-conservation;

D. Number and areas of nominated component parts

7. Lastly, while the nomination dossier lists seven nominated component parts, the Panel has noted that nominated component part 5 is sub-divided into three separate nominated component parts. The serial nominated property therefore consists of nine separate nominated component parts. The Panel would thus be grateful if the State Party could please revise the list of nominated component parts accordingly, providing the names and areas (in ha) for each nominated component part.

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 you 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 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 be 'T. Badman', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Tim Badman
Head, Heritage and Culture

cc. Italian National Commission for UNESCO, Mr Enrico Vicenti, Secretary-General
UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Ms Berta de Sancristóbal, Mr Guy Debonnet and Mr Alessandro Balsamo
IUCN European Regional Office, Mr Boris Erg, Director