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26 January 2023

IUCN Evaluation of Cold Winter Deserts of Turan – Interim Report and request for supplementary information

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 Cold Winter Deserts of Turan were undertaken by Mr Oliver Avramoski, Mr Matthew Emslie-Smith and Mr Rolf Hogan in the period between 25 October and 22 November 2022. 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 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 Parties' 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 as set out below:

1. Please could the State Parties provide further information and/or maps as appropriate indicating:
 - a) the boundaries of all the nominated component parts in relation to the current extent of natural waterbodies and the location and extent of water resource management infrastructures, including the location of existing and proposed
 - i. dams and weirs;
 - ii. canals and constructed channels;
 - iii. artificial lakes and reservoirs, including irrigation ponds;Please also outline the historical development of any such infrastructures, including the date of their creation where known.
 - b) the boundaries of the nominated component parts 4 (Barsakelmes island) 5 (Kaskakulan) and 6 (Delta), and in relation to:
 - i. the exposed seabed area of the former Aral Sea (taking the Aral Sea extent in 1960 as a baseline);

- ii. the extent of salinized soils within and adjacent to these three nominated component parts;
 - iii. the current presence, extent and status of any contaminated soils within and adjacent to nominated component parts?
2. The Panel considers that the transboundary management arrangements of the nominated property should promote, as a priority, the improvement of connectivity in restoring disrupted migratory routes, alongside existing regional conservation initiatives. Please could the State Parties confirm the connectivity status regarding the movement, migration and dispersal of wide-ranging wildlife that are related to the integrity of the nominated property, and in particular confirm and detail where there are any connectivity issues and barriers to animal migration from current or planned fencing. Please could the State Parties also detail the extent and success of measures already taken to remove such barriers to migration, and the plans and future measures to strengthen connectivity through further removal of barriers to migration.
3. Considering the large size and extent of the nominated property, please could the State Parties provide an update regarding the transnational coordination strategy (see Annex D of the nomination dossier) and related management plans for the entire nominated property, including any updates regarding the capacity (resources, staff and management expertise) and any impacts from grazing on the nominated property, including any mitigation measures to limit any such impacts?
4. Please could the State Parties provide an update on the current legal protection status of all nominated component parts and confirm that all the nominated component parts will remain subject to the current (or to a higher) level of legal protection beyond 2024.

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 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,



Tim Badman
Head, Heritage and Culture

cc. Kazakhstan National Commission for UNESCO, Ms Aliya Baisabayeva, Secretary-General
National Commission of Turkmenistan for UNESCO, Dr Chinara Rustamova, Secretary-General
National Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan for UNESCO, Mr. Sayidafzal Mallakhanov, Acting Secretary-General
UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Ms Himalchuli Gurung, Mr Guy Debonnet and Mr Alessandro Balsamo
IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Mr Boris Erg, Regional Director