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H. E. Mr François-Xavier Ngarambe
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Ambassade de la République du Rwanda
12, rue Jadin
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25 January 2023

IUCN Evaluation of Nyungwe 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 Nyungwe National Park was undertaken by Dr. Wendy Strahm and Prof. Inza Koné from 10-17 October 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 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 the 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 2023. The Panel would be grateful to your authorities for further information as set out below:

1. Regarding criterion (ix), the Panel has noted a number of knowledge gaps, such as on the dynamism between closed-canopy and open-canopy forest, between the vast mountain bamboo thickets and the various types of surrounding forests (see nomination dossier), the role of fire, and the effects of the loss of keystone species. In regard to criterion (ix), the Panel also noted that feasibility studies for the proposed reintroduction of Savannah Elephants and Grey Parrots were undertaken very recently. The field evaluation mission also understood that there are biomonitoring reports for Nyungwe National Park, which are not included in the nomination documentations. Therefore, in order to assess the suggested potential of the nominated property to meet criterion (ix), please provide further information, if available, on
 - a. recently published research or current research regarding:
 - i. the dynamism between closed-canopy and open-canopy forest,
 - ii. the dynamism between the vast mountain bamboo thickets and the various types of surrounding forests,
 - iii. the role of fire, and the extent of native liana in areas previously damaged by fire, including whether this is considered invasive,
 - iv. the effects of the past loss of keystone species, such as Elephants and Leopards.
 - b. the latest versions of the feasibility studies for the reintroduction of Savannah Elephants and Grey Parrots,
 - c. the latest biomonitoring reports for Nyungwe National Park.
2. Regarding criterion (x), the Panel has taken note of some potential inconsistencies in the species lists provided, e.g. the numbers mentioned in the description within the main nomination document do not appear to match the species lists in Appendix B of the nomination dossier. Therefore, in order to

ensure accurate data underpins the potential of the nominated property to meet criterion (x), please could the State Party provide a single updated list of species confirmed to be present in the nominated property? Please note if any of these are introduced species.

3. The Panel has also noted that the nominated component parts of Cyamudongo and Gisakura Natural Forests are separated from the main Nyungwe National Forest component part by areas of other land-uses, including tea plantations and settlements. Please could the State Party indicate its willingness, and to what extent it could be feasible, to develop functional corridors for the movement of wildlife between these nominated component parts to improve the connectivity of the nominated property, and how these would relate to the boundaries of Nyungwe National Park?
4. The Panel further noted that an international road currently crosses the nominated property, but that much of the traffic on this road is expected to be diverted in future, to an upgraded road, which passes to the north of the nominated property. Please could the State Party provide updated information on the timeline for this proposed diversion and explain if and how it will be ensured that the traffic crossing the park will be reduced to a minimum? Furthermore, please indicate if it would be possible to reinstate a closure of the road that crosses the nominated property for traffic during the night?
5. The Panel noted that the General Management Plan for the nominated property expired in 2021. The field evaluation mission understood that a Draft Sustainability Plan was in the process of being finalised, and should be approved in March 2023, fulfilling the role of the expired General Management Plan. Please could the State Party confirm that this information is correct, and also provide a copy of the latest version of the Sustainability Plan and the firm schedule for its final approval and subsequent implementation?
6. The Panel has noted furthermore that Nyungwe National Park borders Kibira National Park, located in the State Party of Burundi. Please could the State Party indicate the current situation regarding exchanges on conservation matters between Nyungwe National Park and Kibira National Park, including any arrangements, which support the integrity and protection of the southwestern part of the nominated property?

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 their response concise and to 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 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 be 'Tim Badman', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Tim Badman
Head, Heritage and Culture

cc. Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO (RNCU), Mr Albert Mutesa, Secretary-General
UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Mr Muhammad Muhammad Juma, Mr Guy Debonnet and Mr Alessandro Balsamo
IUCN Office for Eastern and Southern Africa, Mr Luther Anukur, Regional Director