



AMENDMENT/PROPOSAL

Agenda Item	Okavango Delta (Botswana) (N 1432)
Draft Decision	45 COM 7B.4 _____
Submitted by the Delegation of....	South Africa
Co-author(s) (if any)	
Date of submission	

TEXT

1. *Having examined Document WHC/23/45.COM/7B.Add, State of conservation of properties WHC/23/45.COM/7B.Add, p. 11 inscribed on the World Heritage List.*
2. *Recalling Decisions **40 COM 7B.78**, **42 COM 7B.89** and **44 COM 7B.80**, adopted at its 40th (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016), 42nd (Manama, 2018) and extended 44th (Fuzhou/Online, 2021) sessions respectively,*
3. *Welcomes the adoption of the Okavango Delta Management Plan 2021-2027, developed with International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund, and which addresses the past Committee requests on community concerns and the management of invasive alien species, and encourages the State Party to ensure sufficient financial and human resources for its implementation;*
4. *Notes progress made to rationalise the use of veterinary fences, including through the conduct of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) in line with the Committee's decisions, and wastewater management, and requests the State Party to continue efforts to reduce the numbers of fences where possible to facilitate free movement of wildlife;*
5. *Whilst noting the results of the 2018 aerial wildlife survey that indicate an increase of many wildlife populations, expresses its concern over the reported increase ~~of in~~ poaching, in particular of elephants and rhinos, ~~the committee welcomes and also requests the survey conducted by~~ the State Party ~~to in partnership with KAZA TFCA countries of Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia in 2022 as part of a three (3) year circle conduct a new wildlife survey as soon as possible to ascertain the status of~~ ~~which shows a healthy wildlife populations~~ ~~elephant population and a reduction in rhino poaching~~, and encourages the*

State Party to increase efforts to strengthen the efficiency of anti-poaching and address illegal trafficking of ivory and rhino horn;

6. Notes that the threat of poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking also needs to be addressed in a regional context, with emphasis on preserving and restoring ecosystem connectivity, and encourages the relevant States Parties to further strengthen transboundary cooperation including through the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA) and to effectively implement their commitments under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES);
7. Notes with concern the increasingly visible impacts of climate change resulting in environmental changes and reducing the hydrological flow, and considers that these changes could be further exacerbated developments in the Cubango-Okavango River Basin (CORB) potentially impacting the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property;
8. Also welcomes the continuous cooperation between the States Parties of Botswana, Angola and Namibia through the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM), the finalized guidelines on the implementation of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on shared watercourses, and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the CORB reported for completion in 2022, which can support decision-making amidst the development pressure expected to grow in the region, and further requests the State Party to submit the documents to the World Heritage Centre as soon as they are available;
9. Also encourages the States Parties of Botswana, Angola and Namibia to continue their cooperation for the potential transboundary extension of the property to include key areas, which would contribute to a better protection of the OUV and in particular the integrity of the property;
10. Thanks the international community supporting the conservation of the property through the KAZA TFCA initiative, and also the Governments of Flanders (Belgium) and Norway for supporting the initiatives to enhance transboundary cooperation and community involvement through the World Heritage Centre; State of conservation of properties WHC/23/45.COM/7B.Add, p. 12 inscribed on the World Heritage List.
11. While acknowledging that the oil and gas exploration in the north western Botswana is outside the boundaries of the property, the Committee ~~reiterates~~ its utmost concern about the advancement of the oil and gas exploration activities in the environmentally sensitive upstream areas of the Okavango Delta in northwestern Botswana and northeastern Namibia that may pose significant risks to the interconnected water system and the ecosystem, and hence the property's OUV;
12. Reiterates its request to the States Parties of Botswana, Angola and Namibia to ensure that petroleum exploration and other large-scale development projects with potential adverse impact on the OUV of the property are subject to rigorous and critical prior review, including through EIAs that correspond to international standards, including an assessment of social impacts and a review of potential impacts on the World Heritage property, in conformity with the new Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage context, and submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN;
13. Urges the State Party of Namibia to submit the EIA and the Environment Management Plan (EMP) for the on-going oil exploration activities in the CORB to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN without further delay;
14. ~~Also reiterates its request to the State Party to conclude negotiations with remaining licenses to terminate all prospecting activities within the property's buffer zone, and also urges the State Party to provide information on the alleged attribution of new mining concessions inside the property and its buffer zone;~~

15. Further reiterates its position that mineral exploration or exploitation is incompatible with World Heritage status, which is supported by the International Council of Mining and Metals' (ICMM) Position Statement of not undertaking such activities within World Heritage properties;

16. Requests moreover the State Party to ensure that the property's OUV is explicitly referred to in the decommissioning and rehabilitation programme for the borrow pits of the Okavango River Bridge to remedy any impact on the fragile wetland ecosystem, that ecological monitoring and management is included in the project EMP, and that all future projects with a potential negative impact on the property's OUV are subject to relevant impact assessments in accordance with Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines;

17. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December, February 2024, an updated report on the **state of conservation of the property** and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 47th session.