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World Heritage Convention

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## AMENDMENT/PROPOSAL

Agenda Item	8 B
Draft Decision	45 COM/8B. <b>4729</b>
Submitted by the Delegation of....	Qatar
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### TEXT

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents WHC/23/45.COM/8B and WHC/23/45.COM/INF.8B2,
2. Inscribes the **Cold Winter Deserts of Turan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan**, comprising the following component parts: Altyn-Emel East, Altyn Emel Central, Altyn-Emel West, [Barsakelmes Island](#); [Kaskakulan](#); Bereketli Garagum, Gaplankyr, Repetek, Yeradzhi, Saigachy, Saigachy-Beleuli, [Saigachy-Duana](#), [Saigachy-Zhideyli](#) and Southern Ustyurt, on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (ix) and (x)**;
3. Adopts the following Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

#### ***Brief synthesis***

*The Cold Winter Deserts of Turan is a transnational serial property shared by Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The property comprises ~~ten~~fourteen component parts distributed across arid areas of Central Asia's temperate zone between the Caspian Sea and the Turanian high mountains system. The property is subject to extreme climatic conditions with minimal levels of precipitation, very cold winters and hot summers. In spite of these extreme conditions, the property boasts an exceptionally diverse flora and fauna that has adapted to the harsh conditions. The property also represents a considerable diversity of desert ecosystems, their evolution, functions and natural dynamics, covering Turan Deserts from the mountain depressions and piedmonts of Altyn-Emel to the gypsum deserts of Southern Ustyurt, spanning a distance of more than 1,500 kilometres from East to West. Each of the component parts has its own specifics, and at the same time, they complement each other in terms of*

biodiversity, desert types, and ongoing ecological processes. The property holds a vast area of ~~174,415-3,366,441~~ hectares, with buffer zones adding up to a total of ~~20,819-622,812~~ hectares.

#### **Criterion (ix)**

The serial property represents the cold winter deserts as an outstanding example of the development of terrestrial ecosystems in extreme climate conditions and of the evolution of survival and adaptation strategies of plants and animals as ongoing ecological and biological processes. The fourteen component parts include diverse geomorphological desert types, which are reflected by different ecosystems. It is representative of most of the ecological-physiographic vegetation types in the Turan deserts: sagebrush and perennial saltwort vegetation; psammophytic vegetation, i.e. desert grasses; saxaul shrubs and woodland. Taxonomic diversification and morphological convergence of plants are significant ongoing biological processes. Saxaul woodland demonstrates the ability of desert ecosystems for ongoing carbon sequestration and storage. Morphological, physiological and behavioural adaptations ensure survival of animal life as a fundamental ongoing process within the cold winter deserts of Turan. The component parts are important to the migration of migratory birds and ungulate species and serve as node points for migratory species and their dispersal across wider areas in the region.

#### **Criterion (x)**

The serial property hosts very specific and diverse flora and fauna, adapted to the extreme climatic conditions of the Cold Winter Deserts of Turan. The species diversity is high, including diversity hotspots of Chenopodiaceae and plant genera of different families such as Artemisia, Calligonum, Salsola, Zygophyllum or Limonium, including a high share of endemic species. The property hosts numerous breeding birds, and important resting places of migrating bird species, as well as desert-adapted herpetofauna and insects. The Cold Winter Deserts of Turan are the habitat of globally threatened mammals, such as Goitered Gazelle, Saiga and Urial. Further important species that occur in component parts of the property include Kulan, Snow Leopard, Marbled Polecat and Striped Hyena as well as Asian Houbara, Great Bustard, Saker Falcon, White-headed Duck and Egyptian Vulture.

#### **Integrity**

The property's ~~ten~~ fourteen component parts are representative of the Turanian cold winter deserts. They include the most intact examples of desert ecosystems within legally protected areas. The serial property covers a total of ~~174,415-3,366,441~~ hectares, with some component parts benefitting from buffer zones with a combined area of ~~320,819-622,812~~ hectares. The ecosystems fulfil their ecological functions, and host the characteristic plant and animal diversity of cold winter deserts.

Most of the ~~ten~~ fourteen component parts are very remote and far from settlements. However, historical population decline of ungulate species has occurred across the region due to poaching, and significant barriers to migration exist through the border fencing, causing disruption to migratory routes. Further threats to the property include linear infrastructure, such as tracks, roads, railways and canals, affecting connectivity as well as continued poaching and grazing by livestock. Overgrazing by livestock in the areas outside the property can also cause threats to ungulates as it affects their food source availability. The overall threat level is low at the time of inscription but these threats will require close attention, including through monitoring and mitigation action.

#### **Protection and management requirements**

All ~~ten~~ fourteen component parts of the property are publicly owned and protected by the relevant national legislation of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and managed on the basis of specific management plans by state administrations under the responsibility of the relevant ministries. It will be essential for each component part of the property to maintain the strict protection regime in the long term. The three component parts of the Altyn Emel cluster in Kazakhstan are encompassed by the Altyn-Emel National Park, while another two components

*are part of Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve. The component parts in Turkmenistan are fully covered by Nature Sanctuaries and State Nature Reserves. In Uzbekistan, the Southern Ustyurt component part corresponds with the Southern Ustyurt National Park whilst the component parts of, [Saigachy-Duana](#), [Saigachy-Zhidely](#) and Saigachy-Beleuli are covered by the Saigachy complex (landscape) reserve, which is managed as a wilderness area.*

*The priority management objective for all ~~ten~~ [fourteen](#) component parts is to ensure the ecosystem integrity of desert landscapes, including their biological diversity of plants and animals. Each of the component parts benefit from well-defined governance frameworks and management plans as well as staff with growing technical capacities in essential areas of expertise. There are various projects in support of the management of the component parts, including on monitoring and patrolling which will need to be continued along with continued capacity development in relation to the threats, size of the areas and future management objectives, including sustainable tourism not exceeding the carrying capacity and affecting the fragile desert ecosystem.*

*The transnational management will be ensured by a Joint Steering Committee with responsible representatives of all three States Parties on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding, signed on 10 January 2022. The Memorandum commits the States Parties of the property to effective transnational management and protection mechanisms, according to the Operational Guidelines. The joint management is to be implemented and coordinated through the Joint Steering Committee, including through exchanges on the individual and national management plans, by staff exchange, joint public awareness campaigns and environmental education. It is important that the Joint Steering Committee also coordinates approaches to enhancing connectivity between the component parts and the wider landscape and that sufficient budget is allocated by the governments.*

4. Requests the States Parties to ensure the protection and management of the Outstanding Universal Value is guaranteed in the long term, including by:

- a) Increasing the connectivity between the component parts of the property and with the wider ecosystem, including by removing and mitigating barriers to large mammal migration,
- b) Ensuring the legal protection of each component part and each buffer zone is maintained in the long term,
- c) Allocating sufficient funding to the Joint Steering Committee, strengthening the transnational and transboundary management of the property, including through regular exchange and capacity-building and research and monitoring across the ~~ten~~ [fourteen](#) component parts of the property, including on transboundary migration patterns.