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14 December 2023

IUCN Evaluation of Vjetrenica Cave, Ravno – Nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List – 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. The IUCN World Heritage technical evaluation missions to Vjetrenica Cave, Ravno was undertaken by Ms Zsuzsa Tolnay in August 2023. 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 2024, 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 2024. Based on the information available, the Panel considers that the nominated property does not appear to present a compelling case under criterion (vii). However, the nominated property demonstrates a strong potential under criterion (x). The Panel notes a number of different questions regarding integrity, protection and management to address. The Panel would therefore be very grateful to your authorities for further information as set out below:

The IUCN World Heritage Panel has noted a number of inconsistencies regarding the legal protection status and records of inhabitants of the nominated property and buffer zone as well as regarding the reported area of the nominated property and buffer zone provided in the text (see table 1 on p.20) and in the maps (see p.18 and 19) of the nomination document. Therefore, the Panel would be grateful if the State Party could provide:

1. A confirmation of the exact and correct area of the nominated property and its buffer zone in hectares, supported by a confirmed map in pdf format and by a GIS (Geographical Information System) shapefile. In this regard, the Panel would also be grateful for a confirmation on whether or not the Protected Landscape Vjetrenica-Popovo Polje fully encompasses the nominated property and its buffer zone;
2. A confirmation, considering the requirements of paragraphs 95, 98-99 and Annex 5 of the *Operational Guidelines*, of the protection status of the nominated property, its buffer zone and of the watershed of Vjetrenica Cave, including:
 - a) a table providing an overview of all conservation designations that currently provide protection to the nominated property its buffer zone and the watershed of Vjetrenica Cave, especially those that will remain in place in the long term, and which will ensure the regulation of prohibited activities and implementation of effective measures against pollution that could impact the cave system,

- b) a map, and GIS shapefiles for each nominated component part if available, showing all those protective designations that support the protection of the values of the nominated property, its buffer zone and the watershed of Vjetrenica Cave;
 - c) A copy of the 'interest-power matrix' (see p.153 of the nomination document) and confirmation of the total number of inhabitants within the nominated area and its buffer zone, any consultation process and whether these inhabitants would be affected by any access and use restrictions in case of World Heritage listing;
 - d) a map detailing the ownership of the nominated property, its buffer zone and of the watershed of Vjetrenica Cave, and information providing details on whether or not these owners agree with the potential World Heritage status and respective protection requirements (this can be in a table if this is more convenient).
3. An updated assessment of the threats currently affecting the nominated property, as the field evaluation noted that a number of threats noted in the nomination document are no longer present;
 4. Information (in a table if preferred) indicating the current and planned funding and staffing for the potential World Heritage property, including information on long-term funding sources, annual funding levels needed to sustain the management of the nominated property, and funding strategies for the implementation of the management plan.

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 2024**, 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,



Tim Badman
Director World Heritage

Enc.

cc. National Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina for UNESCO
UNESCO World Heritage Centre
IUCN Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office