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IUCN Evaluation of Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf of China (Phase II) [extension] – 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 Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf of China (Phase II) was undertaken by Mr Amran Hamzah and Mr Tilman Jeager in May 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 extension nomination further to the World Heritage Committee's decision 43 COM 8B.3. The Panel will be discussing the nomination again at its second meeting, to be held in March 2024.

Based on the information available, the Panel notes some fundamental difficulties regarding the potential of this extension nomination to meet the requirements of the Operational Guidelines, and a range of differences from the expectations that were set out by the World Heritage Committee in decision 43 COM 8B.3. Reviewing the additional component parts contained in this extension nomination, the Panel notes there is a wide variability across the nominated component parts in terms of their values, integrity, protection and management arrangements and boundary design. Therefore, the Panel wishes to clarify a number of points regarding the serial approach as a whole, and points specific to the nominated component parts, and would be very grateful for supplementary information on the following points:

1. **Selection of nominated component parts:** The Panel recalls that, in its decision 43 COM 8B.3, the World Heritage Committee inscribed the existing property on the understanding that the Phase 2 nomination would, *inter alia*, include "the fourteen additional areas identified in the Phase 1 nomination, fully taking into account ecosystem and habitat diversity of the coastal system, proposed boundaries, values (including species occurrence, abundance and conservation status), threats, integrity, protection and management". Therefore, the Panel seeks clarification and justification on the following issues:
 - a. please provide information regarding the reasons why four of the fourteen additional areas listed in the supplementary information of the Phase 1 nomination dossier (see p. 3) do not

appear to be included in the Phase 2 nomination, including specific comment on each of the following excluded areas: Liaoning Dalian Lvshunkou National Scenic Area; Hebei Tangshan Caofeidian Wetland, Jiangsu Rudong Coastal Wetland, Jiangsu Qidong Yangtze River Estuary North Branch Provincial Nature Reserve, Jiangsu

- b. please provide information regarding the reasons why several potential component parts listed on the State Party's Tentative List, including those listed in the Phase 1 nomination dossier have not been included in the analysis provided in the Phase 2 nomination, including specific comment on each of the following areas: Huanghua Ancient Shell Ridges, Hebei; Yancheng Wetland Rare Birds National Nature Reserve, Jiangsu; Lianyungang Salt Works, Jiangsu; Rudong-Tiezuisha Coast, Jiangsu; Dafeng Pere David's Deer National Nature Reserve, Jiangsu; Qidong North Branch of the Yangtze River Estuary Nature Reserve, Jiangsu. The Panel notes in this respect that peer-reviewed literature specifically highlights the globally significant values of the Lianyungang Salt Works, Cafoeidan Wetland and Rudong Coast.

Based on the above, and consistent with the previous World Heritage Committee decision, the Panel would also be grateful if the State Party could indicate its willingness to include some or all of the above component parts in a revised Phase II nomination (or if this is not possible, to consider including them in a subsequent additional Phase of the nomination).

2. Integrity of the nominated component parts: The Panel recalls that, in its decision 43 COM 8B.3, the World Heritage Committee inscribed the existing property on the understanding that the Phase 2 nomination would, *inter alia*, confirm "the specific presence of the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value within the boundaries of the Phase 2 nomination and their relationship to the inscribed property, including the presence and size of populations of any endemic and threatened species, and of globally significant migratory bird species". The Panel notes that most of the nominated component parts are very small in size, including some extremely small component parts of less than one hectare, and that such small component parts would be insufficient to meet integrity requirements as proposed. Therefore, the Panel would be grateful for:

- a. a summary table indicating the confirmed presence and population numbers of threatened species, as far as available, (a) threatened species found only and specifically within the nominated component parts and (b) threatened species found within the wider Protected Areas within which the respective nominated component part is located.
- b. An explanation for the discrepancies between the restricted boundaries of each of the nominated component parts and buffer zones and the full extent of the boundaries and the zonation of existing protected areas. In the Panel's view, this discrepancy results in important parts of the habitats not being covered by the nominated component parts.

The Panel would also be grateful if the State Party would consider updating and expanding the boundaries of the nominated component parts to match the full extent of the protected areas within which they are located, and would invite the State Party to submit further information, with maps, regarding any of the nominated component parts where such increase in area could be made before 28 February 2024.

3. Protection and Management of the nominated component parts: The Panel recalls that, in its decision 43 COM 8B.3, the World Heritage Committee inscribed the existing property on the understanding that the Phase 2 nomination would, *inter alia*, "provide evidence of effective coordination of management of the entire serial property including planning for any increasing tourism demand, including the development of appropriately scaled and low impact tourism in the property." In this respect, the Panel would be grateful for:

- a. a summary table, and accompanying relevant information, on regulations regarding whether the following activities are allowed or prohibited within each of the nominated component parts, their buffer zones and the wider protected areas: (i) tourist visitation; (ii) collection of shell, mussels, etc.; (iii) fishing; (iv) sand and salt extraction; (v) hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation; (vi) wind farms; (vii) reclamation of intertidal areas,
- b. a table showing the funding available for the management of each of the nominated component parts, including for restoration activities, for the last three years and the next three years,

- c. a succinct overview providing evidence of the effective management coordination for the entire serial property in case of inscription, including management principles, the coordination structure and decision-making processes, overall monitoring and planning for conservation of the nominated property as a whole.

Furthermore, the Panel would be grateful for updated information on:

- d. Information regarding whether any envisaged changes to the boundaries of existing Protected Areas would result in any changes to their protection status and size. Please provide specific information with maps, if any such changes are considered,
- e. the intended establishment of any national parks which may overlap with the nominated components parts, such as Liao River and Yellow River Mouth National Parks, including maps, timelines for designation and envisaged protection status.

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
Head, Heritage and Culture