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Quảng Ninh, ngày tháng 01 năm 2024

**STATE PARTY REPORT ON THE STATE OF CONSERVATION FOR
HA LONG BAY IN RESPONSE TO THE WORLD HERITAGE
COMMITTEE AT IT'S DECISION 45COM 7B.89**

Name of World Heritage property: Ha Long Bay - Cat Ba Archipelago.

State Party: Vietnam.

Identification number: N 672Ter.

1. Executive Summary of the report

This State Party Report (the Report) provides an update on the state of conservation of Ha Long Bay World Heritage site in response to the Decision 45COM 7B.89 of the World Heritage Committee at its 45th session (Riyadh, 2023). Quang Ninh province has assigned Ha Long Bay Management Department in partnership with relevant agencies to implement these findings, which recommended in the Decision. The Report demonstrates that the Outstanding Universal Values (OUV) of Ha Long Bay is intact across all 2 natural World Heritage criteria for which it was inscribed on the World Heritage List. The Report also outlines the actions the State Party of Vietnam and Quang Ninh governments have taken to manage and conserve the integrity of the property. The State Party is deeply committed to the responsible stewardship of the Ha Long Bay World Heritage site and continues to act and invest to protect its Outstanding Universal Value; and closely working with Hai Phong city to effectively and sustainably protect the World Heritage Site of Ha Long Bay - Cat Ba Archipelago. We are looking forward to get more supports from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and IUCN in advising expertise in sustainable management and protection of World Heritage Site Ha Long Bay - Cat Ba Archipelago.

In consistent with the goal of transitioning from a brown to a green economy targets to become dynamic development hub in North Vietnam, a high-quality tourism centre of the region, and one of the economic growth poles of the North Quang Ninh Province has taking full advantage of potential advantages, while ensuring sustainable development, of which World Heritage Site Ha Long Bay plays an important role. The Province has invested for the management and protection of the integrity and OUV of the property to maintain the balance of the relationship between development and conservation and sustainable use of the property, by a range of actions as waste management, carrying capacity study, biodiversity preservation and initiating a sustainable tourism strategy...in conformity with the Operational Guidelines and current regulations. Resolution

No. 30-NQ/TW dated November 23, 2022 of the State Party on socio-economic development and ensuring defense and security in the Red River Delta to 2030, vision until 2045 continued to affirm the strengthening of regional linkages in conservation, exploitation and use of natural resources and biodiversity of natural reserves, natural world heritage sites, including the Ha Long Bay World Heritage Site to manage, use resources effectively and protect the environment, adapt to climate change.

2. Response to the Decision 45COM 7B.89 of the World Heritage Committee

The World Heritage Committee having examined Document WHC/23/45.COM/7B.Add and recalling Decision 44 COM 7B.98 adopted at its extended 44th session (Fuzhou/online, 2021):

2.1. Notes with appreciation progress to address sustainable tourism Management including completion of a carrying capacity study and initiation of the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy, and requests the State Party to ensure That tourism development is based on carrying capacity and to finalise the strategy with the support of sustainable tourism experts as needed, for review by the World Heritage Centre and IUCN:

Quang Ninh Province is the first locality in Vietnam and World Heritage Site Ha Long Bay if the first property in Viet Nam to conduct its carrying capacity assessment in social - environmental - tourism activities. This is a new step, approaching scientific management and controlling the negative impacts of people to the property; and demonstrates the commitment of Quang Ninh in the management, conservation and sustainable tourism development in conformity with the Operational Guidelines and current regulations.

Ha Long Bay Management Department has advised Quang Ninh Province and Hai Phong City to expand the existing ecological carrying capacity analysis conducted for Ha Long Bay to the entire property, ensuring effective tourism management that respect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property and finalise the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy, which based on carrying capacity and approaching in overall of the property towards green growth, sustainable development, heritage and inclusive economy. Some priority solutions of the Strategy are focusing on:

- Developing the Ha Long Bay Integrated Visitor Management System, which have an integrated database that will be shared by all the users that includes: the visitors, the Port Authority, Marinas, Ha Long Bay Management Department, boat Operators, Tour Guides, private Companies operating in Ha Long Bay. It will be able to be accessed through the web, mobile phones (through QR codes that are displayed on various locations, including the ports), kiosks (at the ports and other convenient locations in the city) and Ticket offices. The system should have the functionality as: the first touch point for visitors; Individual visitors and Tour companies can enter the visitor information through the web portal; It will automate and integrate the boat assignments, marina and

port authority approvals, the tour start times for each boat and the boat schedules (when they will visit each location) and the fee collection...

- Timed Ticketing refers to limiting the number of visitors arriving per time period for an optimal Carrying Capacity number on a site. It ensures that the boats/visitors visit the crowded sites at an hourly site capacity level consistently. Without coordinating and uniformly distributing boat arrivals to the sites, the daily carrying capacity is determined in such a way that it can accommodate the maximum Hourly arrival rate.

- Develop and complete the routes, attractions of service for tourism, high-quality tourism products at the sightseeing routes number 3 and number 4 on Ha Long Bay to ensure a balance of visitors among the routes. Replace the overnight boats with small capacity by boats having a minimum capacity of 48 guests or more to achieve optimal guest flow, avoid wasting the tourism capacity of Ha Long Bay. Use the tourism carrying capacity calculation formula that has been researched and applied to Ha Long Bay to evaluate and determine the carrying capacity for the attractions when investing in tourism infrastructure, developing new tourism products on the bay.

- Issuing a Code of Conduct for stakeholders involved in tourism activities in Ha Long Bay; A set of indicators for sustainable tourism (green tourism) for service sectors related to tourism activities in Ha Long Bay.

- Appropriately distribute the revenue from the bay entrance fee for management and conservation of heritage (restoration and renovation of facilities; community education; heritage promotion; environmental protection...). Strengthen the management and environmental protection activities of Ha Long Bay, strictly monitor the socio-economic development activities on and in the coastal areas of Ha Long Bay.

The plan for sustainable tourism development of Ha Long Bay will be developed with the consultation of domestic experts and experts on sustainable tourism of the UNESCO World Heritage Center. The completed plan will be attached to the Report on the implementation of Decision 45 COM 8B.3 of the World Heritage Committee on Ha Long Bay - Cat Ba Archipelago, to the World Heritage Center for IUCN to review and evaluate, before December 1, 2024.

2.2. Notes with appreciation various waste management measures including regulating wastewater treatment in cruise ships, closure of the largest open-pit coal mine in the Ha Long area, promotion of a “green” economic transition, and that water quality is within allowable national limits, however notes with concern that pollution remains an issue in the property and urges the State Party to continue and further strengthen measures, as necessary, including to implement the planned upgrade of wastewater treatment of attractions in Ha Long Bay and closure of industrial activities including coal mining and cement activities in the Ha Long area:

- According to the Quang Ninh Province Master Plan for the period 2021-2030 with a vision to 2050, during the period 2011 - 2020, Quang Ninh exceeded many environmental protection indicators, such as the rate of collection and

treatment of solid urban waste reached 96.2%, the rate of hazardous waste, medical waste collected and treated reached 100%, and the rate of people using clean water reached 98%, ranking second in the country in the Environmental Management Index. The environmental situation has been improved, the level of pollution has been controlled, and the collection and treatment of waste, wastewater has been positively changed. Large projects with high potential for environmental pollution and incidents are strictly controlled, operating safely and stably. There are no establishments causing serious environmental pollution, no residual pollution points of plant protection chemicals in the province. Air pollution has been more tightly controlled through the automatic environmental monitoring system. The work of education, propaganda, dissemination of laws on environmental protection, biodiversity, climate change response has been enhanced in terms of form and practical content.

On March 17, 2023, the People's Committee of Quang Ninh province promulgated the Action Program to implement Resolution No. 10 - NQ/TU dated September 26, 2022 of the Provincial Party Committee on strengthening leadership in natural resource management, environmental protection, disaster prevention and mitigation, climate change response, ensuring water security for the period 2022 - 2030, which assigns specific tasks to departments, branches and localities *“Advising to implement the roadmap by 2030 at the latest to end operations, relocate thermal power plants, cement plants that affect the landscape, environment according to the province's policies and plans and Resolution No. 10 - NQ/TU of the Provincial Party Committee; ending exploitation to restore the environment and closing mines, mineral exploitation, open-pit mines in Ha Long, Cam Pha areas”*. The Nui Beo coal mine - the largest open-pit mining area in Ha Long has been closed.

- The planning of Quang Ninh province for the period 2021 - 2030, vision to 2050 approved by the Prime Minister in Decision No. 80/QĐ-TTg dated 11/02/2023 oriented:

+ The spatial organization solution of industrial development areas is mainly arranged in the coastal plain area, where there are geographical and topographical advantages for industrial development, good inter-regional transport infrastructure, in the Economic Zones with investment attraction policies that have been recognized by the government.

+ Objectives and general orientations for environmental protection work:

(1) Objective: “By 2030, prevent and reduce the trend of increasing pollution and environmental degradation; solve urgent environmental problems; gradually improve and restore environmental quality; prevent the decline of biodiversity, conserve and restore important natural ecosystems associated with the socio-economic development orientation of the province”.

(2) Indicator: the rate of collection and treatment of wastewater in concentrated urban areas in the coastal localities of the bay: Ha Long, Cam Pha, Van Don, Quang Yen by 2025 will reach over 65%, by 2030 will reach over 70%.

(3) On environmental zoning:

* Strictly protected zone, including: the core zone of the World Heritage Site Ha Long Bay and 07 Conservation Areas ...

+ Emission-restricted zone, including: The buffer zone of the World Heritage Site Ha Long Bay; buffer zone of 06 conservation areas; Protection Area II or buffer zone of historical - cultural relics and scenic spots; areas with sensitive environmental factors that need to be protected ...

+ Controlled protection zone: are concentrated residential areas in urban areas, including: inner city, urban area of special, type I, type II, type III urban areas according to the provisions of the law on urban classification.

- On environmental monitoring and supervision: Building a network of environmental monitoring points in Quang Ninh province to ensure synchronization, modernity, connectivity, meeting the needs of collecting, providing information, basic survey data on environment, resources (land, water, sediment, biodiversity ...), serving effectively for forecasting, warning, handling, remedying pollution, environmental protection, sustainable socio-economic development of Quang Ninh province.

Regarding the management, protection and promotion of the value of the World Heritage Site Ha Long Bay, realizing the importance of environmental protection work of the World Heritage Site, Ha Long Bay Management Department has advised Quang Ninh province to invest special resources for the management and environmental protection of Ha Long Bay; at the same time, fully and synchronously implement environmental protection solutions, including:

- Periodically monitor the water quality, sediment in the coastal area and on Ha Long Bay with a frequency of 3 - 6 months/time, at 38 coastal water points and 13 sediment points, including the points of contact between the heritage and the locations where economic and social activities are taking place on the coast ... to manage and control the environment and water quality of Ha Long Bay. The results of environmental monitoring and monitoring show that the environmental monitoring parameters do not change and all meet QCVN 14:2008/BTNMT - National technical regulation on domestic wastewater.

- Implement periodic monitoring of the conservation status of Ha Long Bay heritage according to the guidance in Decree No. 109/2017/ND-CP dated September 21, 2017 of the Government on the protection and management of Cultural and Natural Heritage in Vietnam based on the Set of indicators and criteria for periodic monitoring of the conservation state of the World Heritage Site Ha Long Bay, in which monitoring the conservation state of the values: natural landscape, geology - geomorphology, culture history, biodiversity and environmental protection work of the heritage in order to control, identify and issue warnings, risks affecting the heritage value and deploy timely and appropriate protection solutions. The results show that no other issues have been identified regarding the conservation state that has a risk to the Outstanding Universal Value of the heritage

- Continue to deploy the installation of wastewater treatment systems and apply the on-site wastewater treatment technology Jokaso of Japan at the tourist attractions on Ha Long Bay. So far, an additional on-site wastewater treatment system Jokaso has been installed at the Dau Go cave, Ha Long Bay.

- Continue to improve the effectiveness of the program to reduce plastic waste; promote propaganda for tourists and economic and social enterprises operating on Ha Long Bay “not to bring and use single-use plastic products on Ha Long Bay”.

- Coordinate with the functional sectors to advise Quang Ninh province to issue regulations on ensuring environmental sanitation for fishing boats and cages for marine aquaculture, brackish water on the provincial area of Quang Ninh to prevent activities that harm the environment, protect resources. Deploy the application of Local Technical Standards on materials used as floating buoys in brackish and saltwater aquaculture to ensure sustainability and environmental friendliness.

- Continue to closely coordinate with the functional sectors to strengthen inspection, supervision and handling of violations of regulations on environmental protection, tourism activities, aquaculture, exploitation of aquatic products, security and order, resources...

- Continue to sign the Coordination Regulation on management, protection of the world heritage Ha Long Bay with the relevant functional sectors of Quang Ninh province; Sign the Coordination Regulation with the People’s Committee of Cat Hai district, Hai Phong city on the management, protection and promotion of the value of the World Heritage Ha Long Bay and the bays in the Cat Ba archipelago.

- Enhance propaganda, education and attract the community to participate in the work of heritage protection, environmental protection. Regularly organize activities to collect waste at the foot of the islands, sand beaches, floating waste in the areas along and on the shore of Ha Long Bay with the participation of the community, tourists, economic and social enterprises operating on Ha Long Bay.

2.3. Welcomes the completion of a new 2021-2025 Management Plan for the property, vision to 2040, and also requests the State Party to provide clarification on how the planned “Master Plan for 2021-2030 (vision to 2050) to preserve and promote the value of Ha Long Bay’s World Heritage site” relates to the Management Plan. Ensure any processes to revise national, regional and site-level plans and regulations related to the management of the property are appropriately aligned and integrated and coordinated between the site management authorities and the Provincial and City People’s Committees:

- *Legal regulations on developing Master Plan of preservation and promotion of Ha Long Bay heritage site for the period 2021 - 2030, vision to 205*

- + Pursuant to Decree No. 166/2018/ND-CP issued by the Government of Vietnam on December 25, 2018 stipulating the authority and procedures for

developing, appraising, and approving the Master plan and projects of preservation promotion of historical-cultural relics and scenic spots (hereinafter referred to as heritage) stipulates: The Master plan of preservation, promotion of heritage is the determination of the content and measures to preserve attributes of the heritage; spatial orientation of new constructions, technical facilities and protection of landscape environment in the relic area, including:

* Basic principles: (1) Comply with the provisions of law on planning, investment, public investment, construction, heritage, and international Conventions that Vietnam is a member and other relevant legal regulations; (2) Be consistent with the objectives of the strategy of socio-economic development, national defense and security, and the planning of other industries in the setting context; ensure synchronization of technical infrastructure, harmony of regional landscape and architecture; (3) Ensure the preservation of the attributes of the heritage; support the resources to protect and promote the values of the heritage; (4) Master plan must be prepared and approved for a period of 10 years, with a vision of 20 to 30 years; (5) Comply with regulations and standards for preservation, renovation, and restoration of heritage and in accordance with other approved plans.

* Planning content: (1) Basis for developing the Master plan; (2) Analyzing and evaluating the current status of heritage and its land; (3) Perspectives, long-term goals and short-term goals; (4) Determining the boundaries of the heritage, propose adjustments (to expand or narrow) the heritage protection boundaries; Identify natural landscape areas, restricted construction areas, and new construction areas; Proposing additional rankings of newly discovered relics; (5) Orientation for preservation, repair and restoration of heritage: plan for preservation, repair and restoration of monuments for the entire planning area; list of works that need preservation, renovation, and restoration and the level of preservation, repair, and restoration for each project; basic principles and solutions for preserving, repairing and restoring monuments; (6) Orientation to promote the value of monuments associated with sustainable tourism development; (7) Orientation for spatial organization, height, construction density, architectural form, and materials of new construction projects; Orientation for renovation and construction of technical infrastructure in the planning area; (8) Forecast environmental impacts and propose measures to protect the environment and minimize negative impacts on the environment in the planning area; (9) Proposing component projects, investment phases, priorities and financial sources for the component project; (10) Propose mechanisms, policies and solutions to implement the Master plan.

* Authority of developing the Master Plan: Chairman of the Provincial People's Committee where the heritage is located and Heads of ministries and branches assigned to directly manage the heritage.

* Authority approving the Master plan: Prime Minister

+ Decree 109/2017/ND-CP issued by the Prime Minister on September 21, 2017 on the protection and management of World Cultural and Natural Heritage in Vietnam stipulated:

+ In case of a world heritage site and its buffer zone being a part or the entire area of a national tourist area, special-use forest, or nature reserve, marine protected areas, only one world heritage master plan is required to develop. This master plan needs to incorporate the contents of protecting heritage, tourism resources and forest resources, biodiversity, aquatic resources, geological resources, geomorphology, rights and obligations of the community according to the law on cultural heritage and other relevant laws.

+ The Prime Minister is responsible for making decisions on the developing the master plan of world heritage sites according to the law

+ *Regulations for developing the Management Plan of Ha Long Bay World Heritage property:*

+ According to Decree 109/2017/ND-CP on the protection and management of World Cultural and Natural Heritage in Vietnam, issued by the Prime Minister on September 21, 2017, the Management Plan of the World Heritage site is a document synthesizing measures to preserve the outstanding universal values of world heritage sites, including the assigning of specific responsibilities to all stakeholders related to the implementation of measures of heritage conservation, including:

* Principles for developing a Management Plan of World Heritage site: (1) In accordance with the strategy of local socio-economic and cultural development, strategy of forest protection and other related strategies; (2) In accordance with the world heritage dossier submitted to UNESCO and the world heritage master plan; (3) Ensuring the connection and integration of world heritage protection and environmental protection, requirements for natural disaster prevention and climate change response; and harmoniously resolve the relationship between world heritage protection and sustainable development; (4) Ensuring the transparency and the participation of relevant communities, agencies, organizations, and individuals in the process of developing the Management plan; (5) Ensuring national sovereignty, national defense and security; (6) Be feasible and suitable with resources; (7) The duration of the Management plan is 5 years, with a vision of 20 years.

* Contents of Management plan of the world heritage: (1) Description of the world heritage; (2) Current status of world heritage protection and management; (3) Objectives of the world heritage management plan; (4) National and international legal regulations related to the protection and management of world heritage; mechanisms and policies applied to the protection and management of world heritage; (5) Periodically monitoring the conservation status of world heritage sites; (6) Identifying risks affecting world heritage values and community life to develop regulations on protection of world heritage; (7) Rights and obligations of organizations and individuals related to

the protection and management of world heritage; (8) Planning to strengthen the organizational structure and human resources of the organization assigned to manage and use world heritage; (9) Propose tasks to preserve and promote world heritage values and financial sources for implementation; (10) The world heritage management plan must be divided into 5-year periods to re-evaluate and consider making adjustments (if necessary) to ensure the compliance with the context of protecting and managing world heritages.

* Authority responsible for developing and approving the Management Plan of world heritage: Chairman of the Provincial People's Committee or Head of the ministry or branch assigned to directly manage the world heritage site.

Since being inscribed by UNESCO on the World Heritage List, the Master plan to preserve and promote the value of Ha Long Bay Heritage site to 2020 was approved by the Prime Minister under the Decision No. 142/ 2002/QĐ-TTg dated October 21, 2002. The Master plan is the legal basis for managing, preserving and promoting the values of the site according to Vietnam's Cultural Heritage Law. The Master plan is combination of other planning of specialties in sustainable developing Ha Long Bay area. Up to now, the validity period of the Master plan has expired. Quang Ninh Province assigned the Ha Long Bay Management Department to develop a new Master plan for preserving and promoting Ha Long Bay heritage site for the period 2025 – 2035, vision to 2050, and submit it to the Prime Minister for approval.

To effectively manage a World Heritage Site Ha Long Bay, Quang Ninh province assigned the Ha Long Bay Management Department to coordinate with relevant departments, branches and localities of the province to develop a Management Plan of World Heritage Site Ha Long Bay. The plan is a basis for implementing management tasks, preserve and promote heritage values and assign responsibilities to relevant departments, branches and localities in coordination of implementation of management plan. Each 5 years, the Management Plan is re-approved with new the tasks and solutions for the next 5 years' stage based on the overall goals and orientations. The program of monitoring and evaluation of Plan's goals and solutions is also included in the process of implementing the management plan to make adjustments to suit the actual situation. To date, Quang Ninh province has issued 03 management plans for the world heritage site Ha Long Bay¹. This is a local level legal basis to for effective implementation of the management and protection of the property. The process to develop the Master Plan and Management Plan for the property has been advised of local communities, functional agencies of Quang Ninh Province and Hai Phong city, Ministry of Cultural Sport and Tourism and relevant ministries, experts in conformity with current regulations.

¹ Ha Long Bay heritage management plan for the period 2011-2015, issued under the Decision No. 3509/QĐ-UBND dated November 24, 2010 of the Provincial People's Committee; Ha Long Bay heritage management plan for the period 2017-2021, issued under the Decision No. 2633/QĐ-UBND dated July 7, 2017 of the Provincial People's Committee; Ha Long Bay heritage management plan for the period 2021-2025, issued under the Decision No. 836/QĐ-UBND dated March 7, 2021 of the Provincial People's Committee.

2.4. Request for the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, for review by IUCN, a map with a clear indication of the current boundaries of the property and its buffer zone, including details on the use and management regime within the buffer zone, in line with Paragraph 164 of the Operational Guideline.

Response to the Document CLT/WHC/NOM/20/154 dated October 21, 2020 of the World Heritage Center and Decision 44 COM 7B.98 of the World Heritage Committee, Ha Long Bay Management Department, Quang Ninh province has completed Ha Long Bay map with a clear indication of the current boundaries of the property and its buffer zone, including details on the use and management regime within the buffer zone. However, in order to clarify an exact boundary for the property on the map with the GIS data and ensuring that Ha Long Bay - Cat Ba Archipelago and its environment, tourism activities are effectively and sustainably managed based on carrying capacity and current regulations, the State Party is intended to submit to the World Heritage Centre a Proposal of minor modification of buffer zone for the World Heritage property in line with Paragraphs 163 and 164 (for is following the Annex 11) of the Operational Guidelines, by February 1, 2025 for review and approval.

3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State Party which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value

No further conservation issues having an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Values were recorded during the assessed period.

4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity:

No further conservation issues having an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Values were recorded during the assessed period. Some project proposals intended to be implemented nearby the property were discarded.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report:

The State Party agree to upload this report for public access on the World Heritage Centre's State of conservation Information System.

6. Signature of the Authority

Attention to:

- Ministry of Cultural, Sport and Tourism;
- Vietnam National Commission for UNESCO;
- Quang Ninh Provincial People's Committee;
- The World Heritage Center;
- UNESCO Office in Hà Nội;
- IUCN Việt Nam;
- Department of Cultural Heritage;
- Quang Ninh Department of Cultural and Sport;
- For record.

DIRECTOR

Vu Kien Cuong

