

THE MOSI-OA-TUNYA/ VICTORIA FALLS WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY



STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT

ZIMBABWE AND ZAMBIA



2024

**MOSI-OA-TUNYA/ VICTORIA FALLS WORLD HERITAGE
PROPERTY**

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PROPERTY DETAILS

- a) **States Parties:** *Zimbabwe and Zambia*
- b) **Name of World Heritage Property:** *Mosi-oa-Tunya/ Victoria Falls*
- c) **Property Identification Number:** N509
- d) **Geographical coordinates to the Central point:** *17°56" S and 25°55" E*
- e) **Date of inscription on the World Heritage List:** *15th December 1989*
- f) **Organization or entity responsible for the preparation of the Report:** *Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (Zimbabwe) and National Heritage Conservation Commission (Zambia)*
- g) **Reporting period:** *2024*
- h) **Date of the Report** *-February 2024*

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Date 01/02/2024

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

The States Parties (SPs) of Zimbabwe and Zambia have continued to collaborate and join efforts to ensure the sustainable management and conservation of the transboundary Mosi-oa-Tunya/ Victoria Falls World Heritage Property for the benefit of both the present and future generations. The SPs submitted the last State of Conservation (SoC) Report in the year 2021 highlighting joint management efforts undertaken in upholding the Outstanding Universal Values (OUVs) of the property. This report covers responses to the UNESCO Decision 45 COM 7B. 10 and highlights some of the joint conservation activities undertaken between 2022 and 2023.

The UNESCO Decision 45 COM 7B.10 on the property highlighted areas of success such as the implementation of a concrete and time-bound Action Plan. The Decision raises concern on the growing development pressure and the potential impacts of the Batoka Gorge Hydroelectric Scheme on the OUV of the property.

The States Parties of Zimbabwe and Zambia took note of the concerns and provided appropriate responses. The report described conservation actions employed to minimize any possible negative impacts to the immediate environment and adjacent areas with features that convey OUVs, whilst promoting sustainability. Baseline studies and Environmental Impact Assessments are also ongoing to ensure that geological and geomorphological processes and key attributes in the property and buffer zone are minimally impacted.

Other conservation issues encompassed are activities related to Research and Monitoring, Resource Protection and Site Maintenance, Public Awareness Initiatives and Capacity Building. The States Parties have continued undertaking research and monitoring of wildlife, heritage resources and tourism management. The two States Parties have also identified areas to undertake joint monitoring and actions such as the control of invasive alien species in the property, disaster risk management and the implementation of a sustainable financing strategy for the site.

2 RESPONSE TO THE DECISION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Responses to Decision 45 COM 7B.10 on the Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls World Heritage Property are outlined below:

MOSI-OA-TUNYA / VICTORIA FALLS (ZAMBIA, ZIMBABWE) (N 509)

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/23/45.COM/7B.Add,
2. Recalling Decisions **36 COM 7B.7**, **38 COM 7B.7** and **44 COM 7B.177** adopted at its 36th (Saint-Petersburg, 2012), 38th (Doha, 2014) and extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021) sessions respectively,
3. Welcomes the continued cooperation between the two States Parties in strengthening the joint management of the transboundary property, and the continued efforts to undertake monitoring and control of invasive alien plant species;

Response: The States Parties take note.

4. Notes again with increasing concern the inevitable negative impacts of the proposed Batoka Gorge Hydro Electric Scheme (BGHES) on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property due to seasonal rising of water levels and partial disappearance of some swash in a portion of the gorges within the property, and requests the States Parties to implement the 2022 Reactive Monitoring mission recommendation to revise the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context to undertake a comprehensive geomorphological and/or geological assessment of the gorge environment that takes into account the property boundaries, and resubmit the revised ESIA to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN before making any decisions that may be difficult to reverse in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;

Response: Recalling that the States Parties of Zambia and Zimbabwe were applauded by the World Heritage Committee, World Heritage Centre, Advisory Bodies and various States Parties to the UNESCO 1972 Convention during the Extended 45th Session of the World Heritage Committee in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia for volunteering to champion the Sustainable Development (SD) Agenda by putting to test and piloting the implementation of Sustainable Development Policy in the context of the World Heritage Convention and Priority Africa. The two States Parties have since resolved to optimize the SD Agenda to vigorously pursue this issue of power development and ensure that it adequately integrates the 2022 Reactive Monitoring Mission recommendation to revise the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context to undertake a comprehensive geomorphological and/or geological assessment of the gorge environment that takes into account the property's boundaries, and resubmit the revised ESIA to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN before making any decisions that may be difficult to reverse in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;

Thus follow-up actions to this decision: -

- (i) **The two States Parties are already in discussions with the World Heritage Centre on the possibility of hosting the first African Conference on Sustainable Development. This will be carried out in collaboration with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and Africa World Heritage Fund (AWHF). The conference is aimed at capacitating Heritage Professionals, African World Heritage Site Managers, Advisory Bodies (IUCN, ICCROM and ICOMOS), Committee Members and indeed the Public Private Actors to share ideas on how projects of this magnitude could be implemented without impacting negatively the OUV, in particular the integrity of Mosi-oa-Tunya /Victoria Falls Sites attributes and those of other World Heritage Site across Africa. This is considering the fact that development in various parts of Africa including at World Heritage Sites on the top of the Agenda of the African Union. The two States Parties will utilize a Develop-By-Consensus Approach using the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context appreciating the fact that if these sites are not well managed may be vulnerable to loss of values embedded therein.**
 - (ii) **The concept note and a road map on the same will be shared with the World Heritage Centre and AWHF and other stakeholders once the internal processes are finalized by end of June 2024.**
 - (iii) **The relevant authorities (Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and National Heritage Conservation Commission-Zambia) in the two States Parties will engage identified relevant stakeholders on the outcomes of these preparations spelling out the objectives and expected outcomes of the program.**
 - (iv) **The States Parties note the Decision and relevant competent authorities will revise and resubmit the ESIA.**
 - (v) **It is worth reporting here that the two States Parties have commenced engaging stakeholders in mobilizing resources to carry out recommended studies including geomorphological and geological assessments and Sustainable Development Program.**
5. Reiterates its concern over the increasing pressure from tourism infrastructure within and around the property, exacerbated by the absence of strategic planning and also requests the States Parties to prioritize the review and update the Joint Integrated Management Plan (JIMP) to ensure that necessary safeguards and thresholds are incorporated to mitigate against developmental pressures for the protection of the property's OUV and further requests the States Parties to adhere to the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, prior to taking any decision that is difficult to reverse;

Response: The States Parties are in the process of revising the Joint Integrated Management Plan(JIMP) and is expected to be concluded by the end of June 2024. The process was funded by the UNESCO WHC under the International Assistance Requests Program and co-financed by the two States Parties. The States Parties takes note of the request to adhere to the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context.

6. Regrets that the construction of the Mosi-oa-Tunya Livingstone Resort Hotel has concluded despite the Committee's request to halt further activities and urgently requests the State Party of Zambia to implement mitigatory measures integral to legal conditions of approval issued by Zambian Environmental Management Authority and contained in the Joint Management Plan (JIMP), the ESIA has been revised in

accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context and a comprehensive Environmental and Social Management Plan has been developed and submitted together with impact assessments to the World Heritage Centre;

Response: The State Party of Zambia has commenced implementing mitigatory measures integral to legal conditions of approval issued by Zambian Environmental Management Authority and contained in the Joint Management Plan (JIMP).

The process of revising the ESIA in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context has started including the development of a comprehensive Environmental and Social Management Plan.

7. Further requests the States Parties to submit a request for a boundary modification in accordance with the Operational Guidelines to set the precise boundaries of the property and its buffer zone, aligned with past Committee Decisions and the property's Statement of OUV and including details of the internal zonation system and its rationale to protect the property and its OUV;

Response: The States Parties appreciate the Committee's Decision and will submit the request for boundary modification.

8. Notes that the first phase of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on the cumulative development and environmental pressure on the property has been undertaken, requests furthermore the States Parties to seek early inputs and technical guidance from IUCN in undertaking the second phase of the SEA and encourage the States Parties to submit an International Assistance request to that effect;

Response: This is noted. The States Parties will action accordingly.

9. Reiterates its request to the States Parties to summarize how the findings of the analysis undertaken on the water flow, rainfall and upstream activity has informed management, and the measures subsequently taken to ensure water abstraction from the Zambezi River continues to be adapted in the face of climate change;

Response: The analysis of findings undertaken on the water flow, rainfall and upstream activity enables the States Parties to appreciate the impact of climate variations on the property and monitor the upstream activity of water abstraction from the river. This information aids the States Parties to monitor water entitlement and abstraction as they affect water flows within the WHS, that is considering the changing climatic conditions and various developmental needs.

10. Requests moreover the States Parties to implement all other recommendations from the 2022 joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission, including to:
 1. Ensure that tourism infrastructure development within the property and its buffer zone is consistent with the aim to enhance the protection of the OUV of the property and in line with the Joint Integrated Management Plan,
 2. Harmonize the roles and responsibilities of the National Heritage Conservation Commission and the Department of national Parks and Wildlife for the management of the property in Zambia;

Response: The States Parties take note and will endeavor to implement the recommendations.

11. Finally requests the States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 **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 46th session in 2024.

Response: This is well noted.

3 OTHER CURRENT CONSERVATION ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE STATE(S) PARTY(IES) WHICH MAY HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PROPERTY'S OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

The States Parties carried out several sustainable conservation and management activities to protect and maintain the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls World Heritage Property. The activities undertaken are detailed below.

3.1 RESEARCH AND MONITORING

The importance of research and monitoring cannot be over emphasized as they remain vital to the conservation and protection of the OUV of the property. It is through research and monitoring that States Parties were informed and identify areas requiring attention in upholding the OUV of the property.

3.1.1 General Management Plans: In view of the above, the State of Zimbabwe completed crafting the General Management Plans for the two National Parks to the site; the Zambezi National Park and the Victoria Falls National Park. The 10 - year management plans 2023 – 2033 will assist in the joint efforts with the SP of Zambia to properly manage the property.

3.1.2 Site Tour and Ground verification exercise: The Joint Site Management Committee (JSMC) undertook a ground verification exercise of the Property to understand existing and proposed developments. This was in preparation for the visit by the UNESCO/IUCN monitoring mission to the site. The JSMC visited all the proposed sites in Zambia and Zimbabwe that were to be visited by the mission experts. On the Zambian side, sites visited included; The Mosi-o a-Tunya Livingstone Resort Hotel, the Proposed Batoka Hydroelectric Scheme project and the Eastern Cataract.



Members of the JSMC during the ground verification exercise of the VFWHP

- 3.1.3 Bird Survey: The Mosi-oa-Tunya /Victoria Falls World Heritage Property is also an Important Bird Area which attracts keen bird enthusiasts from both States Parties and around the world. Bird surveys are conducted twice a year; in January and in the month of July. Vulture aerial Survey: On an annual basis vulture survey in Zambezi National Park and adjacent protected areas are conducted. The Survey focuses on vulture nesting site distribution and success. The survey is conducted in collaboration with stakeholders such as the Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust.
- 3.1.4 Tree planting and monitoring: Planting of indigenous tree species in the property is a regular exercise conducted by both States Parties within and around the property. Different stakeholders are invited to participate in this important exercise including the youth. Some trees are planted to rehabilitate areas that were invaded by invasive alien species. A follow up exercise is conducted to monitor the rehabilitated areas.
- 3.1.5 De-snaring of wildlife- an intensive exercise is on-going in the site to rescue and de-snare wildlife.



De-snaring operation on a buffalo

- 3.1.6 Site Inspection: The Joint Site Management Committee conduct site inspections annually to appreciate and identify areas requiring attention.
- 3.1.7 Human wildlife Co existence and wildlife collaring: Monitoring of wildlife elephants is on-going activity in the two States Parties. Various conflict mitigation strategies in and around the property are implemented including community sensitization on animal behavior.

3.2 ACTIVITIES PLANNED AND UNDERTAKEN

The following activities were undertaken during the reporting period. The main objective was to protect and conserve the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

3.2.1 Revising the Joint Integrated Management Plan

The States Parties are in the process of revising the Joint Integrated Management Plan (JIMP) and is expected to be concluded by the end of June 2024. The process was funded by the UNESCO WHC under the International Assistance Requests Program and co-financed by the two States Parties.

3.2.2 Celebrating the Africa World Heritage Day

Following the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee meeting that took place in Doha, Qatar in 2014, the 5th May was adopted by the committee to celebrate the Africa World Heritage Day. This day is celebrated under a theme and the 2023 theme was “**Africa natural and cultural Beyond Borders**”. The purpose of celebrating this day is to raise awareness on the importance of Africa’s diverse natural and cultural heritage and encourage local actors to take an active role in conserving their heritage for the benefit of the present and future generations. Secondly, the celebration is aimed at encouraging appreciation, ownership and participation of the various stakeholders in the preservation and promotion of African heritage. Lastly, to promote international cooperation and regional integration between African countries to protect and managed shared heritage, to bridge cultural divide and to promote mutual respect and understanding between different communities. The States Parties of Zambia and Zimbabwe actively participated in this day by cleaning up the site by involving stakeholders and explaining to them the importance of protecting and upholding the OUV of the property. Local authorities actively participated in this day.

3.2.3 Joint Meetings between the States Parties of Zimbabwe and Zambia

The Joint Site Management Committee (JSMC) and the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) meetings are on-going between the States Parties. The meetings are hosted interchangeably between Zambia and Zimbabwe, however, it is worth reporting that in the period under review, after a long break, the two Ministers responsible for Tourism and Heritage from Zambia and Zimbabwe met during the Inaugural Joint Ministerial Committee meeting in Livingstone, Zambia. The two ministers affirmed their commitment to uphold the UNESCO 1972 Convention and management of the Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls World Heritage Site by facilitating the effective implementation of the Operational Guidelines and the Joint Integrated Management Plan.



The Inaugural Joint Ministerial Committee Meeting, May 2023

3.3 SITE PROTECTION

The States Parties undertook various conservation activities on a daily basis to uphold the values of the site. Among these included litter management and management of barricades. The importance of this activity cannot be overemphasized.

3.3.1 Control of Invasive Alien Species: The States Parties continued controlling invasive alien species such as the *lantana camara* and the water hyacinth using the mechanical and chemical control methods. This activity is on-going.



Lantana camara Eradication exercise

3.3.2 Fire Management: One of the risks to the long-term sustainability of the natural resources vis-à-vis vegetation in the Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls World Heritage Property is the risk of uncontrolled fires. In an effort to protect the natural habitat of the Site from uncontrolled wild fires, the responsible institutions in the respective States Parties region carried out controlled burning by creating fire-breaks and land clearing through grading in selected areas of the property. Identified stakeholders actively participated in this activity.



Fire Management in the WHS

3.3.3 Land Audit in the World Heritage property: The States Parties identified the need to carry out a land audit in the World Heritage site. The purpose of the audit was aimed at appreciating the existing tourism facilities, identify potential tourism development sites as well as identifying possible threats to the OUV of the site.



The Joint Site Management Committee carrying out Land Audit

3.4 TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION BETWEEN ZAMBIA AND ZIMBABWE OVER THE MANAGEMENT OF THE VICTORIA FALLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE

3.4.1 Joint Technical Committee meetings

The States Parties of Zimbabwe and Zambia continued to exhibit high level of collaboration in the management of the property. The management structure, the Joint Site Management Committee has been meeting interchangeably. In amplifying the commitment of the States Parties, Permanent Secretaries attended the Joint Technical Committee in May 2023 in Livingstone, Zambia.



Joint Technical Committee, May 2023

3.4.2 Reactive Monitoring Mission

This was following the request by The World Heritage Committee for the States Parties of Zambia and Zimbabwe to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission (RMM) to Mosi-oa-Tunya / Victoria Falls World Heritage property. The State parties invited the RMM on the 9th to 15th February 2022. The State parties are seriously considering the recommendations that came from the assessments.



Reactive Monitoring mission participants

4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN CONFORMITY WITH PARAGRAPH 172 OF THE OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

A number of developments have been proposed to be undertaken within the MoT/VFWHS and its' buffer. As per requirement both by the environmental laws and the WHC, these proposed developments have to undergo the Environmental and Heritage Impact Assessment process (EHIA). The proposed developments described below are mostly at the scoping stage and the EIA documents have not yet been produced for evaluation by the management bodies.

4.1 Proposed Activities within the World Heritage Property

There are currently no proposed activities within the World Heritage Property

4.2 Proposed Activities and Developments within the Buffer.

There are currently no proposed activities within the World Heritage Property

5 PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT

The States Parties have **no objection** to having the Report uploaded for public access.

6 SIGNATURES OF THE AUTHORITIES

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APPENDIX 1: JOINT SITE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN FOR 2024

S/N	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTION	TIME FRAME
1.	Carry out Geomorphological/geological studies	ZAMBEZI RIVER AUTHORITY	June 2024
2.	Revise and resubmit the ESIA for the Batoka Hydroelectric scheme to IUCN	Zambezi River Authority	To be advised
3.	Revise and resubmit the ESIA on the Mosi-oa-Tunya Resort	ZEMA and NHCC	Dates to be Advised
4.	Develop the Environmental and Social Management Plan and submit to the World Heritage Centre	ZEMA and NHCC	Dates to be Advised
5.	Participation in the World Heritage Committee meetings	STATES PARTIES (NHCC, Zimparks, ZRA experts, NATCOMS and political leaders)	On going
6.	Promote participation in the UNESCO World Heritage Youth Forums and Africa Youth Forums	NATCOMS/STATES PARTIES	On going
7.	Carry out modelling on the backflow up the gorge as a result of damming - Batoka Hydroelectric scheme	ZAMBEZI RIVER AUTHORITY	Date to be advised
8.	Confirm the coordinates and place beacons around the world heritage property on both Zambia and Zimbabwean side	STATES PARTIES (Zimparks and NHCC)	May 2024
9.	Review and update the Joint Integrated Management Plan of the Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls Site	STATES PARTIES (Zimparks and NHCC)	June 2024
10.	Submit a request for a boundary modification in accordance with the Operational Guidelines	JSMC	August 2024
11.	Co-host Joint Site Management Committee meetings	STATES PARTIES (Zimparks and NHCC)	On going
12.	Host Joint Technical Committee meetings	STATES PARTIES (Zimparks and NHCC)	On going
13.	Host Joint Ministerial Committee meeting	STATES PARTIES (Zimparks and NHCC)	On going
14.	Seek early inputs and technical guidance from IUCN in undertaking the second phase of the SEA	JSMC	September 2024
15.	States Parties to submit an International Assistance for conducting the second phase of the SEA	STATES PARTIES (Zimparks and NHCC)	By 31 October 2024