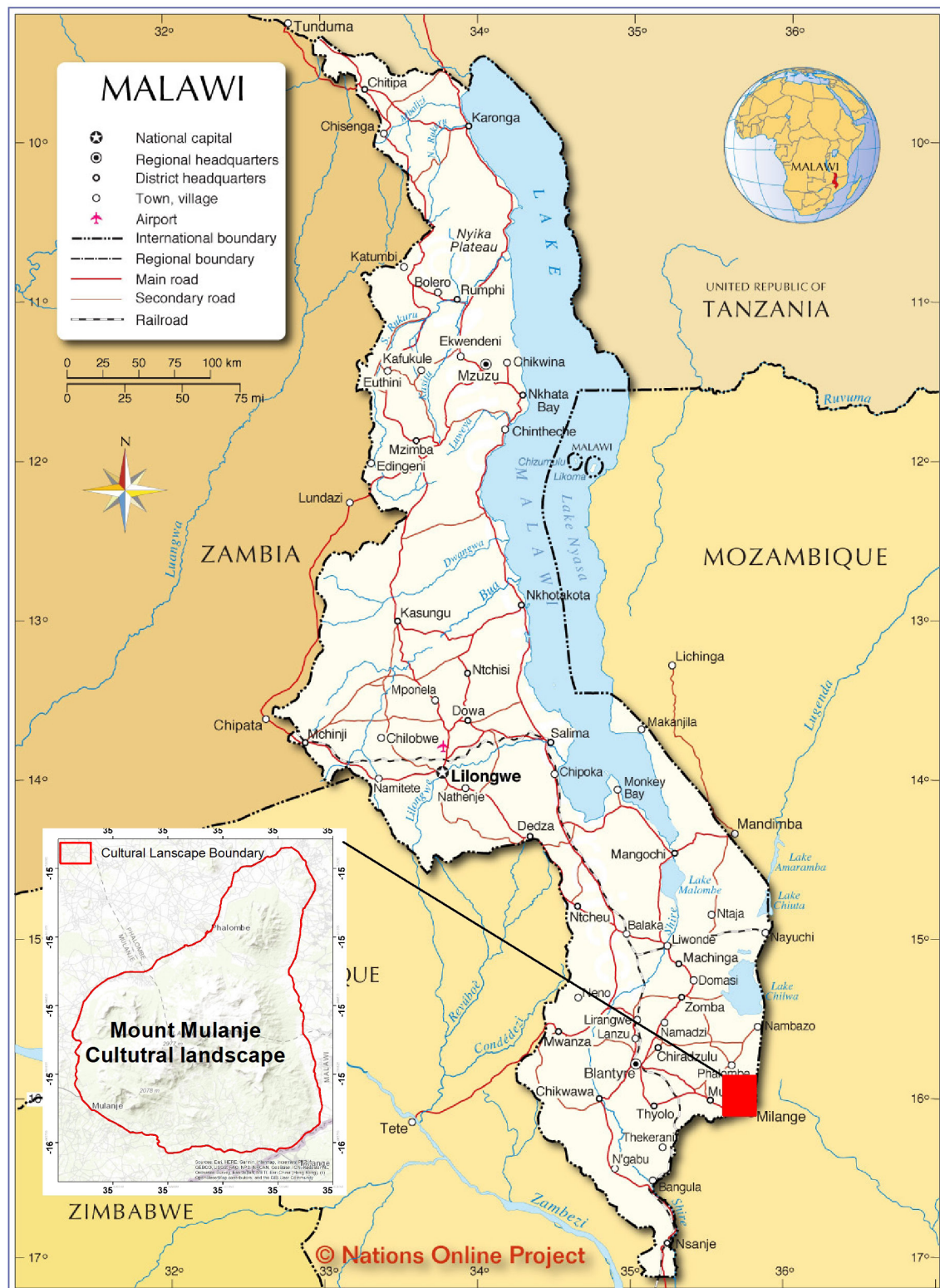




EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STATE PARTIE

The Republic of Malawi



Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape from the African and National Context

STATE, PROVINCE OR REGION

Mulanje & Phalombe Districts: Southern Region of the Republic of Malawi.

NAME OF THE PROPERTY

Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape (MMCL)

GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES

The Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape (MMCL) consists of the Mulanje Mountain Forest Reserve (MMFR), which is located in Southern Malawi between latitudes

15°54'42" South and longitudes and 35°39'29" East on the approximate centre of the property.

TEXTUAL DESCRIPTION OF THE BOUNDARIES OF THE NOMINATED PROPERTY

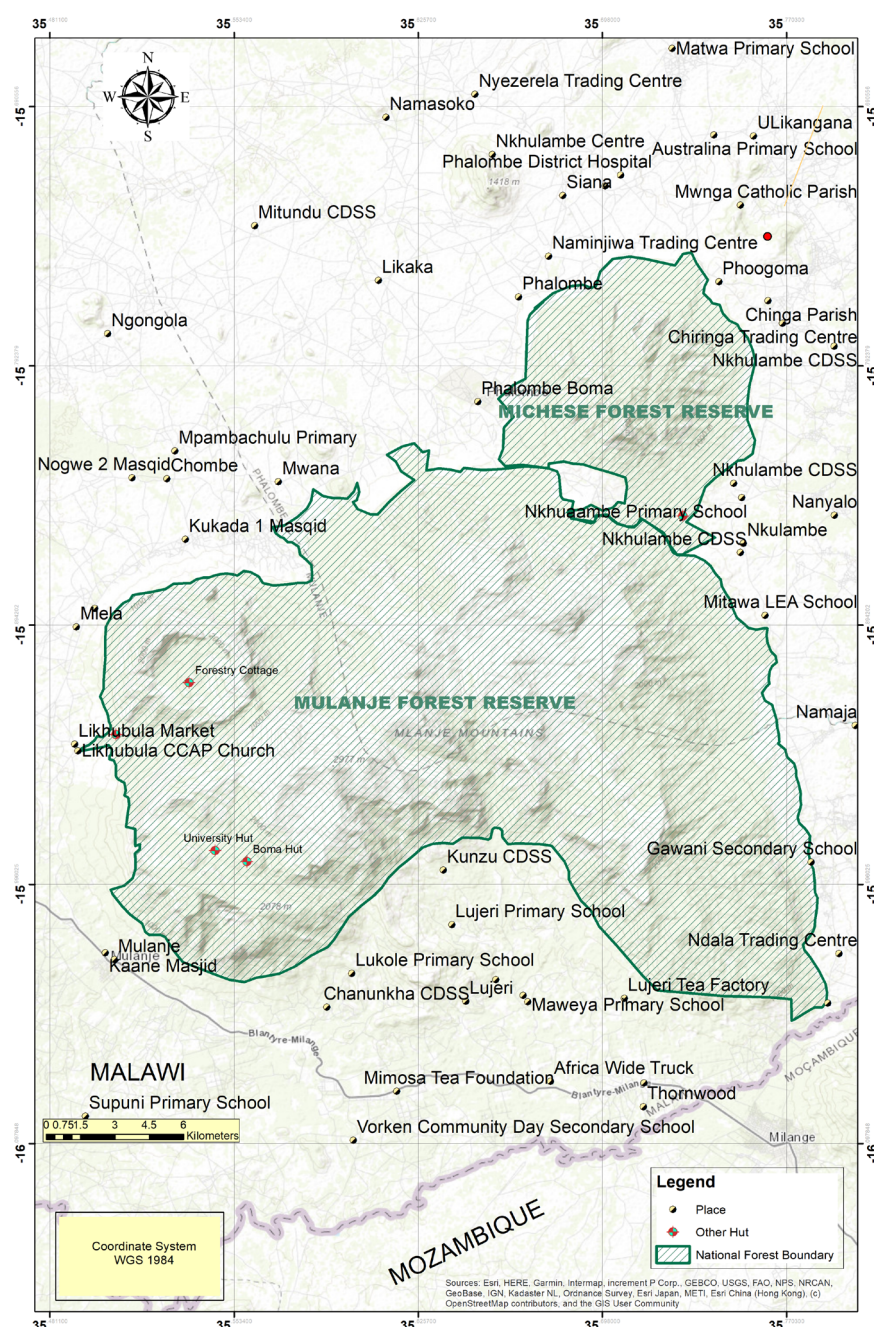
Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape covers an area of 89,732 hectares (897km²) and is defined by the boundaries of Mulanje Mountain Forest Reserve (MMFR) and the Mount Mulanje Biosphere Reserve, which constitute the "Property". Therefore the "Property" embraces these boundary and there is no buffer zone but buffering areas and mechanisms. The Core Zone of the Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape (MMCL) consists of the Mulanje Mountain Forest Reserve (MMFR) and the Mount Mulanje Biosphere Reserve, which is located in Southern Region of Malawi, near the border with Mozambique. This boundary includes all the plateau area which form the sources of rivers such as Ruu, Thuchila, Lichenya, Lujeri, Muloza, Sombani, Likulezi and Likhubula. Therefore, regardless, of the internal zonation of the

Forest and Biosphere Reserve as core area, transition and buffer zones, the entire area is considered as the Property or the "core area" of the World Heritage Site. This delineation is an established legal boundary which is overseen and managed by the Government of Malawi through the Department of Forestry (DoF). Thus, the boundary of the property has also largely been influenced by Legal Framework and Protection. This "Property" boundary clearly circumscribes the attributes and values that define this cultural Landscape associated with the Mang'anja, Yao and Lhomwe communities, among others.

The adjacent and surrounding area around the MAB boundary, which follows the main road around Mount Mulanje, forms a mixture of rural and commercial (tea

estates) land uses. This area is not a straight line, yet it is easily recognized on all maps and the Landscape itself. These points represent key points along the Property boundary, which conveniently provides a Buffering mechanisms arising from the land uses that are not likely to change in the near future. The area also includes other identified heritage attributes defining the

wider cultural Landscape and travelling along it, the visitor gets an overall idea of the size of the Property with its grandiose Landscapes. The transition zone is bounded by villages Chipoka, Nande, Namani and Mtambalika in the south; Likhubula, Chambe, Mwanamulanje and Mphaya in the west; Chole in the north; Gawani and Matola in the east.

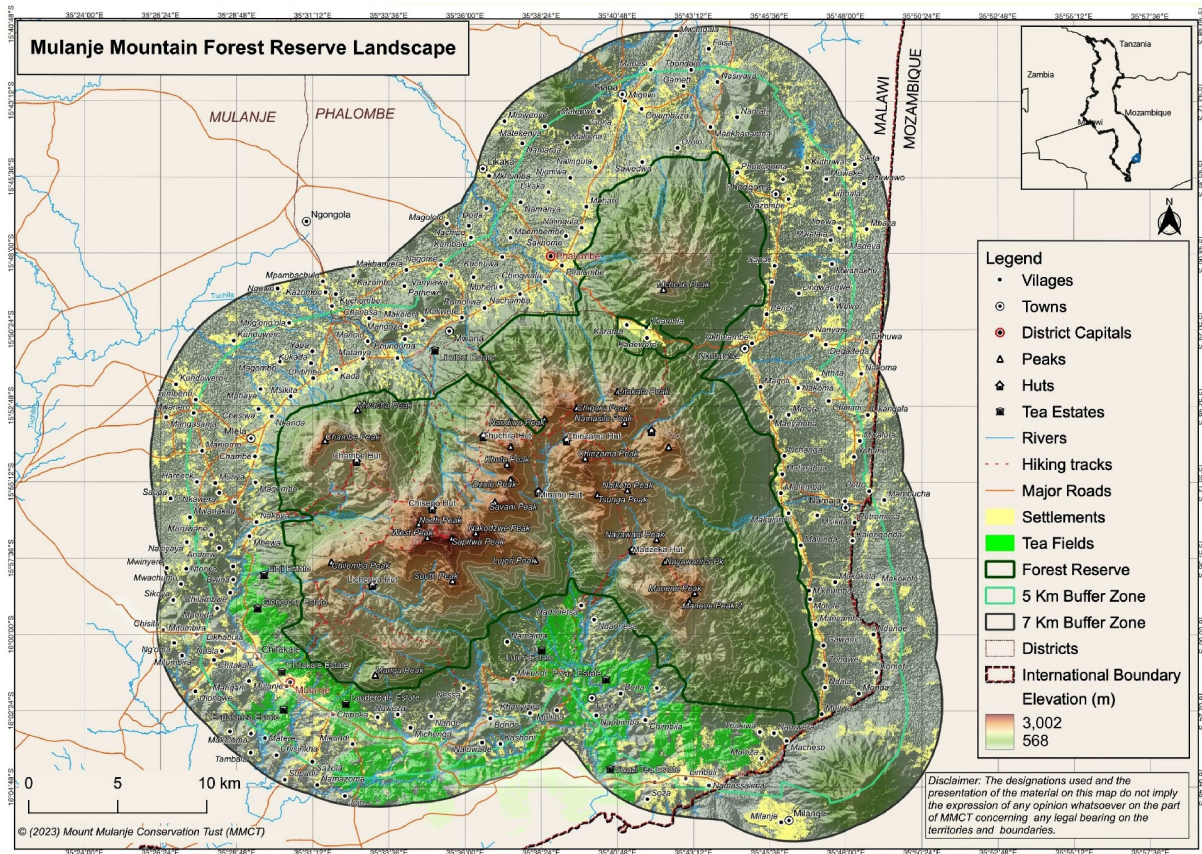


Map of National Mount Michese and Mout Mulanje Forest Reserves as National Protection Systems

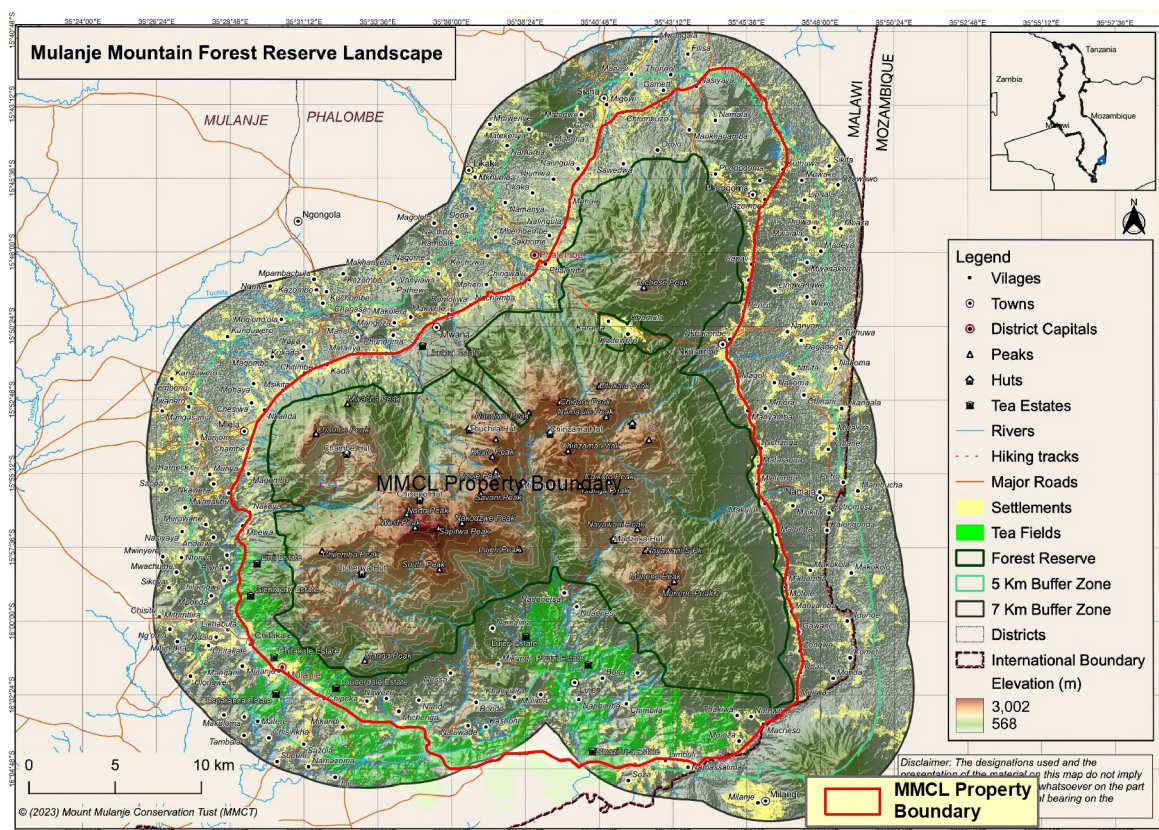
BUFFER ZONE

There will be no Buffer zone for this Property as there are buffering mechanism through community awareness and by laws, private land ownership with defined landuse systems, Forest, Man and Biosphere Reserves Designations. Therefore, the combination of an accessible road network, community engagement

strategies, Fire Occurrence monitoring, private land considerations, existing designations, collaborative efforts, and integrated buffering mechanisms within current frameworks collectively justifies the decision not to implement a separate buffer zone around Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape (MMCL).



MMCL MAN AND BOISHERE MAP



Comparative Maps of Mount Mulanje Biosphere Reserve in relation to Boundary of the Nominated Property

CRITERIA UNDER WHICH PROPERTY IS NOMINATED

❖ **Criteria (iii):** Bears a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living, or which has disappeared.

❖ **Criteria (vi):** Be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.

DRAFT STATEMENT OF OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL

Brief Synthesis

The Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape is an outstanding and unique African example of how the collective attitudes and beliefs of a rural society have shaped a Landscape over time in response to prevailing needs. It has survived for over 100 years in the face of other religions manifesting in the

Landscape. Mount Mulanje is home to a rich Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) that reflects the beliefs, customs, and way of life of the local people. It contains the traces of prehistoric, archaeological, historical and historic fortified settlements and the intangible cultural traditions and practices

of the Mulanje and Phalombe ancestors which serves as a focus of cultural and ritual activities continuing and characterising the cultural Landscape today. Mount Mulanje represents an outstanding example of a Landscape where the use and management of natural and cultural resources is sustained by a wider frame of religious beliefs that define the codes, roles, obligations and behavioural patterns of the community towards the space and the resources. Control of access and the use of such sacred and spiritual places is vested in worldviews of individuals and the community as a whole, the traditional custodians. This Traditional Custodianship at Mulanje represents an exceptional community value-based model of natural and cultural heritage stewardship. The Cultural Landscape is home to several indigenous ethnic groups or communities, including among them the Mang'anja, the Lhomwe, and the Yao. Despite their varied cultural background evidenced by respective migration patterns, they all have shared and unique reverence of the sacredness and spirituality of the Landscape. These communities have a rich history and cultural diversity that is deeply rooted in the mountainous terrain and the surrounding natural environment.

The intangible aspects of the Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape are supported by the physical cultural attributes such as historical routes and paths, burial grounds, settlement sites, ritual and sacred sites, rock art sites (though outside but adjacent to the "property") and ancient caves associated with traditional practices. All this represents a rare material embodiment of their world view of local communities and their traditional belief systems. The Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape is a highly aesthetic symbol, spiritual and sacred Landscape which is illustrative of the interaction of man and nature through time and space, and is a unique example demonstrating the manifestation of rich and diverse blending of natural and cultural values. The geological setting and ecological systems are critical in demonstrating these interactions. The Landscape is an exceptional example of a system where the needs of man and nature are combined into a system of mutual benefit with the resulting system providing expansive cultural traditions and practices that have (in the past), and continue to protect the Mountain and its eco-system.

CRITERIA UNDER WHICH INSCRIPTION IS PROPOSED (AND JUSTIFICATION FOR INSCRIPTION UNDER THESE CRITERIA)

❖ Criteria (iii)

Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape bears a unique and exceptional testimony of an outstanding and unique African example of how the collective attitudes and beliefs

of local communities have shaped the Landscape over time in response to prevailing needs. The Landscape illustrate the interplay between intangible aspects,

such as belief systems and spiritual values, and tangible features like archaeological sites, monuments, ritual and sacred grounds, cultural traditions and practices associated with the divers and living communities of the area and region resulting from validated historical migration patterns of the associated communities. The Traditional Custodianship Systems of Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape are firmly anchored in the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of diverse local communities and is largely informed by local cosmologies associated with the unique human and nature interactions of the Landscape. Such cosmologies are dependent on local social mechanisms, political systems and religious conventions that regulate the use and management of cultural and natural resources. Therefore, Mount Mulanje illustrates three unique and rich aspects of this systems, namely: the diverse local communities' worldview; the uses of places of cultural significance (sacred places and spirituality); and the role of the traditional authority in the management of heritage resources. These cosmologies embody the traditional practices, sacredness and spirituality, the beliefs, and ways of life of the local communities, including that of the Lhomwe, Mang'anja, Yao and many other ethnic groups that have and continue to interact with the Landscape in different but dynamic ways which are informed by their Traditional Knowledge Systems.

The Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape is a

source of spiritual nourishment for people from different cultures, ethnic groups and races, but particularly those who live around the Mountain. The mountain serves as a focal point for cultural activities, rituals, and ceremonies, preserving a rich cultural heritage that has endured for centuries. These communities have an intricate and intact framework of traditional systems and beliefs that dwell on the duality of the Mount Mulanje as a "Mother of us All" and one that must be respected, failing which calamities may occur, something that is well known beyond the borders of Malawi. Testament to this is the presence of traditional leaders, herbalists and spiritualists who sustain the revered, sacred, spiritual and sustained interactions between nature and culture through the in-depth knowledges embodied in their century old Traditional Knowledge Systems and their codification through a traditional custodianship approach implemented through Traditional Chiefs (custodians of traditions), and traditional practitioners (herbalists, spiritualists etc.) operating with national, regional, district and zone structures. This system is reinforced through formal management systems. Its unique significance lies in preserving and showcasing a rich Intangible Cultural Heritage that has endured across centuries, thereby providing a testament to the region's cultural continuity through time and space, and which continues to shape present day cultural traditions and practices.

❖ **Criteria (vi):**

Mount Mulanje is a symbol of nature's gifts to humankind, a place protected by a belief system and set of cultural values shared by the various ethnic groups living around the site and that are intricately intertwined with the Mount Mulanje's own attributes of overall impenetrability. The Landscape demonstrates direct association with living traditions, spiritual beliefs, diverse testimonies of cultural traditions, and music of outstanding universal significance as illustrated through oral traditions, cultural heritage traditions and practices of the Lhomwe, Man'ganja, Yao and many other ethnic groups. These are all embodied in the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) dimensions of this sacred Landscape. Its role as a unifying force among different and diverse ethnic groups

further solidifies its exceptional cultural testimony and relevance on a national and regional level. The traditional healers, herbalists and spirit mediums, guided by spirit dreams, are able to access and use the potency of the mountain to the benefit of the local communities. The place is also associated with a great snake (*Napolo*), which becomes destructive if not properly treated or respected. It is believed to cause earthquakes, landslides, and floods that erase villages from the mountain slopes. The Cultural Landscape is a repository of spiritual beliefs of the people of Mulanje and Phalombe districts and is seen as a sacred abode of their ancestors, and continues to shape human-nature interactions through time.

STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

The continued existence of the Landscape despite intense land use pressures in the twentieth century right up to the onset of state protection is proof of the existence and effectiveness of a traditional system of beliefs and norms which served to prevent the disappearance of the Landscape. To a significant extent, this system still exists for local rural people. The Property boundary is defined as being synonymous with the Forest and Biosphere Reserve Boundary, and it encompasses the ecological systems and places associated with the tangible and intangible dimensions of the Cultural Landscape. The preserved traditional knowledge, sacred rituals, distinctive

customs, and architectural remnants stand as enduring testaments to its Intangible Cultural Heritage confirm the validity of these boundaries.

The gazettement of the area as a protected Forest Reserve and recognition as a Biosphere Reserve underlines a long-term commitment by the Malawi government, Management Authorities (Department of Museums and Monuments and Department of Forestry) and local communities (traditional custodians) for its protection. An essential part of the process of gazettement was the definition of site boundaries in consultation with local communities, and these consultations were

further conducted during the nomination process. The gazetted boundary is large, comprehensive and adequate to ensure complete representation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage traditions and practices, including its supportive ecosystems, sacred places, rivers, Mount Mulanje, forests and ritual sites which are all illustrative of the exceptional and unique values of this sacred and spiritual cultural Landscape. The Property (core area) encompasses the entire Mountain, and therefore, encloses all the areas in which the cultural practices take place, together with the major associative sites.

The property is effectively managed, thereby continuously mitigating internal and external threats to the expression and maintenance of its Outstanding Universal Value. The rock structures and the ecosystems that make up the Landscape are intact, and various longstanding conservation efforts are in place to maintain the integrity of the physical and natural Landscape, hence the attributes and values of the property that sustain the unique and outstanding Intangible Cultural Heritage practices of MMCL. Some of the threats are identified but limited to the Phalombe area of the property is illegal charcoal processing which is gradually decimating vegetation in this area. However, there are mitigation measures to curb this threat, and this includes memorandum of agreements with communities on resource utilisation, forestry policies, district protocols and active restoration is being implemented at MMCL. These mitigations need to be enhanced to continuously mitigate this

threat. Furthermore, the same area, was affected by the recent cyclones that affected Mozambique and Malawi, and this would require long term rehabilitation conservation from the Management Authorities. There is also domestic harvesting of firewood by local communities to support their livelihoods in the adjacent areas outside the Landscape. If its inside the Property, local communities are guided by Forest Reserve guidelines and policies on what can or cannot be harvested (controlled). Another potential threat is mining, however no actual mining has taken place in the Landscape, except issuance of exploration permits. It is important to note that whilst this is the case, there are shared social and scientific position against such forms of development within the Landscape. There is increasing social counter action to such developments in and around the MMCL, including inter-government dialogue on the matter. While there is no buffer zone, the land uses around the property are adequate to ensure the protection and deter encroachment from outside, while internal encroachments have been curtailed by the Mount Mulanje Forest Reserve (MMFR) Conservation Framework and continuing adaptable strategies, including the community engagement agreements signed with respective local communities. The land uses around the site include subsistence and commercial tea farming. However, there is need to integrate Cultural Heritage management practices in the re-formulation of the Reserve Conservation Framework and the Community Engagement Framework for the property.

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

Mount Mulanje stands as a revered Cultural Landscape whose authenticity is anchored in the Traditional Knowledge Systems giving “sustenance” to the Intangible Cultural Heritage and practices illustrating human-nature interactions through time and space, thereby portraying an enduring narrative of human-environment interaction. The authenticity of Mount Mulanje lies in its rich tangible and intangible elements, and how both connect with nature. The Landscape’s tangible features, including its distinct geological formations, diverse ecosystems, resonate with the intangible essence of cultural traditions, rituals, folklore, and indigenous knowledge woven seamlessly into its fabric. Firstly, the traditions and practices express a strong belief system that sustains the spirit, spirituality and feeling of the place which conveys the Outstanding Universal Value. Second, the Mount Mulanje’s highest peak (*Sapitwa*) is considered sacred by the communities surrounding the mountain where the spirits of their forefathers live, and no one should go there without traditional guidance. Generally, if anyone violates the traditional protocols of the Landscape, they will disappear or never come back alive. This belief system is respected all over and it helps to protect the traditions and practices of the area. The preservation of traditional knowledge, cultural traditions and practices is passed down through generations within the local communities surrounding Mount Mulanje. This transmission underpins its authenticity. The identified sacred rituals,

traditional craftsmanship, folklore, and oral traditions bear witness to the unbroken transmission of cultural heritage in the area. The protection and maintenance of the same is embodied in the Traditional Management Systems associated with the Landscape, including the accompanying formal protocols governing and authenticating traditional herbalists at national level, which is enforced at the local level of the Property. This includes how IKS is used to maintain the sacred shrines at different levels of the mountain such as Dziwe la Nkhalamba where rainmaking rituals and sacrifices take place and the holy caves of Nambirira and the presence of living traditions in the form of spiritual healers and their medicine which have been accepted across the region. These traditional practitioners are the custodians of the Traditional Knowledge Systems central to the traditions and practices of the local communities.

The belief system in the Landscape has also evolved due to different cultural interactions the Landscape has had with its occupants at different settlement periods illustrated by the archaeological, historical, colonial and contemporary periods. Evidence of these interactions can be seen through the archaeological and rock art sites (though outside the Property), the ICH practices, Islamic, Christianity and Animist belief systems, which all express the convergence of spirituality and sacredness in the Landscape. The Landscape has enjoyed spirituality and

sacredness through time and space until in this present moment. Therefore, Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape's authenticity, embedded in its tangible and intangible heritage, sustained cultural traditions and practices, documented evidence, and proactive conservation efforts through TMS and traditional custodianship of the Landscape, signifies its eligibility as a distinguished and unique Cultural Landscape. The Traditional Management System is central to safeguarding its

unique spirituality and sacredness, as well as its intergenerational legacy for future generations. However, the Indigenous Knowledge System and the resultant TMS needs to be documented in detail through research due to intergenerational gap emerging among the traditional custodians and the gradual attrition of affinity to indigenous knowledge and practices due to modern religions ravaging the African continent.

PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

The property is protected by Traditional Management Systems and national heritage laws providing regulatory policies, guidelines and mechanisms for protecting both culture and natural values of the Forest and Biosphere Reserve. In regard to management systems, the Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape is managed through a combination of both traditional and modern management systems. Traditional laws are in the form of community by-laws and Traditional Management Systems which mainly protect cultural heritage sites and regulates community activities within the Landscape. Mount Mulanje represents an outstanding example of traditional custodianship system enshrined in actions guided by customs and belief systems, carried out by local communities, which have ensured a continuous use and preservation of the symbolic and cosmological significance of the Landscape. This TMS provide a codified and regulated traditional protocols that inform the

sustainable use and management of natural and cultural resources, which is sustained by a wider frame of religious beliefs that define the codes, roles, obligations and behavioural patterns of the community towards the space and the resources. Traditional custodianship of Mount Mulanje, firmly anchored in the Intangible Cultural Heritage of local communities (including their practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills) and largely informed by local cosmologies/worldviews, have shaped the Landscape over time in response to prevailing needs. Traditional custodianship at Mulanje represents an exceptional value-based model of natural and cultural heritage stewardship. This Traditional Management System, anchored in the robust and dynamic traditions of the local communities, involves local chiefs, herbalists, spiritualists, appointed community members and elders, which ensures the protection and management of the property at the local level.

National laws include the Monuments and Relics Act of 1990, Museums Act of 1989 and the Local Government Act of 2010 which safeguard the cultural heritage in its diversity and furthermore, they empower local communities to undertake necessary measures to protect their cultural heritage within their communities. On the other hand, the Forestry Act of 2017, National Parks and Wildlife Act of 2015 and Environmental Act of 2017 safeguard the natural heritage of the property as a Forest and Biosphere Reserve. As a biosphere, the property is protected through the Biosphere Reserves and the Statutory Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves approved in 1995. Biosphere recognition supports biodiversity conservation and sustainable development enhancing the relationship between people and their environments. This constitute the “modern management system” implemented through the current MMRF Integrated Conservation Management Plan (2020-2030) and the Cultural Heritage Resources Management Plan (2024-2028) accompanying this dossier. The modern management system

is coordinated through the Departments of Forestry and the Department Museums and Monuments (DMM), while a number of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) such as the Mount Mulanje Conservation Trust (MMCT) that operate in the Environmental conservation and protection sector support the conservation of the Property. The Department of Forestry in conjunction with Environmental NGOs mainly manage the natural heritage of the Landscape while the Department of Museums and Monuments, with other stakeholders, manages the cultural sector of the Landscape. Both Management Plans will be integrated at the review stage in the future, thereby creating an Integrated Resources Management Plan for the Property driven by the Government Departments, NGOs and Traditional Custodians of the MMCL. Also, and currently, there is an exploration of establishing an Integrated Resources Management Framework bringing together all different sectors and stakeholders, while recognizing sector specific strength towards driving a shared conservation and development agenda at MMCL.

NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION OF OFFICIAL LOCAL INSTITUTION/ AGENCY

- Organization: Department of Museums and Monuments
- Address: Off-Paul Kagame Highway, Area 5.
- P.O. Box 264. Lilongwe. Malawi.
- Tel: +265 888 551 808
- Email: lovemoremazibuko@yahoo.com