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World Heritage Convention

46 COM

AMENDMENT/PROPOSAL

Agenda Item	Sado Island Gold Mines, Japan
Draft Decision	46 COM 8B.18
Submitted by the Delegation of:	Bulgaria
Co-author(s) (if any)	
Date of submission	

TEXT

Draft Decision: 46 COM 8B.18

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents WHC/24/46.COM/8B and WHC/24/46.COM/INF.8B1,

2. **Inscribes** ~~Refers the nomination of the Sado Island Gold Mines, Japan, on the World Heritage List on the basis of criterion (iv) back to the State Party~~

~~in order to allow it to:~~

~~a) Modify the boundaries of the nominated property to exclude the area in Aikawa-Kamimachi Town corresponding to the zones identified as Shimo-Yamanokami, Sakashita, Kitazawa and Yajuro which contains many evidence of post-Edo period mining, which is not the focus of the nomination, to meet the conditions of integrity and authenticity;~~

~~b) Expand the buffer zone of the Aikawa-Tsurushi Gold and Silver Mine component part offshore;~~

~~e) Provide an explicit commitment from the holders of the mining rights not to reactivate commercial mining on the land of the nominated property and the buffer zones;~~

3. Takes note of the following provisional Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

Brief synthesis

The Sado Island Gold Mines are a serial property located on Sado Island, some fifty-five kilometers west of the Niigata Prefecture coast. It is formed of three component parts articulated around two main mining areas – the Nishimikawa Placer Gold Mine and the Aikawa-Tsurushi Gold and Silver Mine – illustrative of different unmechanised mining methods implemented during the Edo period (1603-1868). The first cluster covers a large mining area used for placer gold mining, including waterways necessary for placer mining. The second cluster includes two component parts connected by a route today interrupted for a short section and corresponding to the Nishi-Ikari-michi and Tsurushi-michi Pass. The two component parts of the second cluster cover two different mining areas – the Tsurushi Silver Mine and the Aikawa Gold and Silver Mine Area. The latter also includes part of the Aikawa-Kamimachi Town, in which the remains of the Sado Magistrate's Office are found. Mostly tangible attributes reflecting mining activities and social and labour organisation are preserved as archaeological elements, both above and below ground, and landscape features.

Criterion (iv): The Sado Gold Mines is an exceptional example in the Asian context of the continuity of manual mining and smelting technology in a period when mechanisation was progressively being introduced elsewhere. The management system and social and work organisation deployed by the Tokugawa Shogunate at Sado made it possible to extract and process considerable quantities of high-quality gold for global standards in the 17th century. This is reflected in the mining area and settlement organisation. Based on the characteristics of ore deposits found on Sado Island, the Shogunate applied and integrated production organisation and methods most suitable for extracting and processing the ore. To guarantee the efficiency of operation, settlement, mining and processing functions coexisted in the same areas or in close proximity to one another.

Integrity

The Sado Island Gold Mines comprise the most important areas reflecting gold production processes applied on Sado Island during the Tokugawa Shogunate, such as mining methods adapted to different types of deposits, a series of production processes, and the transition of the controlled settlement system.

The component parts still retain their key features, as past mining and settlement zones, and have not been destroyed or significantly altered. The property is a serial property comprising the two areas of the Nishimikawa Placer Gold Mine and the Aikawa-Tsurushi Gold and Silver Mine. It is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the attributes of the OUV of the site. A significant number of remains of mines, and their associated settlements, survive both on the surface and underground within the nominated property.

The sites of mining and settlements within the nominated property are, as a whole, well preserved and managed appropriately by the owners or the custodial bodies based upon appropriate legal frameworks.

Authenticity

In Sado Island Gold Mines, the location of the key activities, the layout of land arrangements and modifications to carry out mining activities or to adapt them for residential or production purposes, physical traces of mining-related operations such as tunnels, waterways, and headraces, terraces, post-holes, landforms, as well as of ore-processing and administrative functions demonstrates the past use and functions carried out at these sites. The settlement zones have maintained their original layout, although their built fabric has changed, as well as the way in which spaces are used. The key sources of information for the authenticity and understanding of the functioning of the nominated series are represented by ancient documentary records, especially drawings and images. These documents are crucial for understanding and interpreting the remains still on site.

Protection and management requirements

All component parts are designated as Important Cultural Landscapes or Historic Sites under the national Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. The Important Cultural Landscapes designation relates to the inhabited areas, such as Sasagawa and Aikawa-Kamimachi Town, while the Historic Sites designation covers the mining areas. Protection is extended also to natural or

artificial topographic features. Activities in both types of designation are regulated by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, which operates at the national level. Sado Municipality has issued guidelines to provide support in case of interventions within protected landscapes. For projects that may have the potential to have negative impacts on the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, heritage impact assessments will have to be carried out by the implementing body.

The buffer zone of Nishimikawa Area is protected under the Cultural Properties Act as an Important Cultural Landscape. The buffer zone for the Aikawa-Tsurushi component part is protected as Landscape Special District through the Landscape Act, including the portion encompassing the western offshore region of the buffer zone. A considerable portion of the land-based buffer zone to the west of Aikawa is also identified as an Important Cultural Landscape and hence protected under the Cultural Properties Act. This extends into the offshore region.

The heritage management system has established processes and protocols for ensuring connection at the national, prefectural and local government levels. The legislative and institutional frameworks ensure the protection of all three areas with a transparent hierarchy and referral of controls and decisions. Community engagement is enshrined in social processes and approaches from the national level down. The Sado City government structure allows for conservation activities to be complemented with programmes across other divisional areas, such as museums and tourism. It also allows for engagement with stakeholder entities, including the commercial and private sectors. Once inscribed a World Heritage Council will be established as a decision-making collegial body regarding World Heritage matters. The Council will be administered by Niigata Prefecture. Putting into operation decisions taken by the Council will be the responsibility of the World Heritage departments of the Niigata Prefecture and Sado City.

The Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP, January 2023) has been prepared as an umbrella document to clarify policies, procedures, concrete measures and the administrative management system. This plan is supported by existing preservation and management plans for the component parts (i.e. Nishimikawa, Tsurushi and Aikawa).

In the context of multiple land ownerships, both government and private, and local residents across the nominated property, the CMP provides guidance

through flowcharts on decision-making processes and the operation of activities such as heritage impact assessments. It includes a section that provides for the roles of various stakeholders, including each level of government responsibility. Regarding some key stakeholders, such as Golden Sado, it is indicated that appropriate agreements will be made, including aspects such as management, public access and use.

34. Recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- a) Strengthening the protection of the entirety of the buffer zone of the Aikawa-Tsurushi Gold and Silver Mine component part by designating it as Important Cultural Landscape,*
- b) Embedding Heritage Impact Assessment mechanisms into the Landscape Plan that are based on the potential impacts on the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value and not on the size of the projects,*
- c) Developing a long-term archaeology strategy to ensure that future archaeological research is undertaken in a consistent and informed manner,*
- d) Developing guidelines for forestry management to ensure that disturbance of subsurface archaeology is minimal,*
- e) Developing an interpretation and presentation strategy and facilities that comprehensively address, at the site level, the whole history of the nominated property throughout all periods of mining exploitation,¹*
- f) Developing a carrying-capacity study and visitor management to ensure that a potential increase in tourism does not negatively affect the nominated property,*
- g) Reviewing the plans adopted before the Comprehensive Management Plan to verify that their provisions are coherent with the aim of protecting the proposed Outstanding Universal Value in the long term,*
- h) Considering, in the future, the designation of clearly identified former mining areas as nationally designated historic sites.*

5. Requests the State Party to submit the map showing the boundaries of the property and buffer zone revised in accordance with the ICOMOS recommendations as inscribed by 1 December 2024,

¹ The World Heritage Committee takes note of the statement made by Japan, as regards the interpretation and presentation strategy and facilities that comprehensively address, at the site level, the whole history of the nominated property throughout all periods of mining exploitation as referred to in paragraph 4.e), which is contained in the Summary Record of the session (document WHC-XXX).

6. Also requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre by 1 December 2025, a report on the implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations for review by the World Heritage Committee at its 48th session.