

WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN COMMENTS TO ICOMOS

THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF AL-FAW ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREA (KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA)

IUCN provides the following comments based on a review of the nomination by the IUCN World Heritage Panel and the views of five external desk reviewers. The nominated property is nominated under criteria (ii), (iv) and (v) and covers an area of 4,847.73 ha with a buffer zone of 27,548.3 ha. The nomination dossier notes that 40% of the nominated property overlaps with 'Uruq Bani Ma'arid, which covers a total area of 1,276,500 ha and which has been inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2023 under criteria (vii) and (ix) further to IUCN's inscription recommendation. 15% of the nominated property's buffer zone also overlap with 'Uruq Bani Ma'arid. 'Uruq Bani Ma'arid is considered to be amongst the 0.3% of the most irreplaceable protected areas in the world, mainly due to the presence of the reintroduced Arabian Oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*, VU). Besides the Arabian Oryx, the property has been the site of successful reintroduction of two further globally threatened antelope species: Arabian Sand Gazelle (*Gazella marica*, VU), and Arabian Gazelle (*Gazella arabica*, VU). 'Uruq Bani Ma'arid is also considered an Important Plant Area (IPA).

The nominated property is listed as a National Heritage Site and protected by the Law of Antiquities, Museums, and Urban Heritage of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In addition, the regulations established to protect the nature conservation values of the 'Uruq Bani Ma'arid Protected Area also support the protection of the nominated property's cultural values, according to the nomination dossier. The responsibility for the management of the nominated property is shared between the Heritage Commission of the Ministry of Culture and the National Centre for Wildlife. A Joint Working Group between both authorities has been established to develop a joint management framework for 'Uruq Bani Ma'arid and the nominated property (see also IUCN's 2023 evaluation). IUCN welcomes the integrated protection and management approach taken for both properties.