

WORLD HERITAGE MINOR BOUNDARY MODIFICATION PROPOSAL – IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

W-ARLY-PENDJARI COMPLEX (BENIN/BURKINA FASO/NIGER) – ID No. 749ter

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The W-Arly-Pendjari Complex World Heritage property was first inscribed on the World Heritage List as W National Park of Niger (property area of 220,000 ha) under natural criteria (ii) and (iv) (today criteria (ix) and (x)) in 1996 (Committee Decision 20 COM VIII.A). In 2017, the World Heritage Committee (Decision 41 COM 8B.3) approved the extension of the property to Benin and Burkina Faso to become the W-Arly-Pendjari Complex transboundary World Heritage property (property area of 1,714,831 ha), designated under criteria (ix) and (x).

In its extension decision, the World Heritage Committee recommended “the State Party of Niger to consider designating the buffer zones which exist for the W National Park, Niger as formal World Heritage buffer zones through the submission of a Minor Boundary Modification in order to provide a consistent approach to buffer zones across the W-Arly-Pendjari Complex as a whole”. This has been reinforced through several requests by the World Heritage Committee to the State Party to submit a minor boundary modification, including in Decisions 44 COM 7B.79 and 45 COM 7B.3.

IUCN’s previous evaluations are available at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/749/documents/>.

2. SUMMARY OF PROPOSED BOUNDARY MODIFICATION

A minor boundary modification has been submitted by the State Party of Niger, with support from the States Parties of Benin and Burkina Faso, to formalise the addition of a buffer zone to the Nigerien component of the property (W National Park in Niger).

The proposed buffer zone has an area of 230,926 ha and comprises the entire Tamou Total Wildlife Reserve (RTFT) and part of the Dosso Partial Wildlife Reserve (RPFD) (both classified as IUCN Category IV protected areas). In line with previous World Heritage Committee decisions and state of conservation reports, the proposed buffer zone coincides with the existing national buffer zone of W National Park of Niger and the UNESCO W Transboundary Biosphere Reserve.

This additional buffer zone supplements the existing buffer zones of the Beninese and Burkinabe components of the property and would increase the total buffer zone area to 1,332,147 ha (from 1,101,221 ha).

The buffer zone development process involved several consultations with local stakeholders, including riparian communities, and delimitation of the boundaries in a participatory manner.

3. IMPACT ON OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

In line with IUCN’s 2017 evaluation, the proposed buffer zone submitted in this minor boundary modification proposal would strengthen the integrity of the property, and enhance the preservation of the property’s Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). According to the minor boundary modification dossier, the buffer zone contains complementary ecosystems, which are beneficial to populations of large mammals (a key attribute under criterion (x)), especially during the dry season, whose habitat and range extend further than the boundaries of the property.

The surrounding buffer zone will also provide an additional layer of protection through reducing the proximity of the property boundary to the attributes of OUV. Thereby, according to the State Party, assisting in mitigating the impacts of potential threats, such as illegal intrusions and the extension of small-scale agriculture.

All proposed buffer zone areas are legally protected under national legislation and controlled by respective management units under the supervision of the Director General of Water and Forests. Following inscription of the new buffer zone, strengthened collaboration between these units and that of W Niger National Park would be expected. IUCN notes that the technical and financial capacity of the respective management bodies should be strengthened for the buffer zone to fulfil its purpose, as outlined above.

In conclusion, IUCN considers this minor boundary modification would reinforce the integrity, and protection of the OUV, of the property, in line with paragraph 104 of the *Operational Guidelines*. Therefore, IUCN recommends that the Committee approve the minor boundary modification proposal, in line with previous Committee decisions.

4. RECOMMENDATION

IUCN recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopts the following draft decision:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents

WHC/03/27.COM/7B, WHC/03/27.COM/7B.Corr,
WHC-04/28.COM/15B, WHC-05/29.COM/7B.Rev,

WHC/21/44.COM/7B.Add, WHC/23/45.COM/7B.Add.2, WHC/24/46.COM/8B and WHC/24/46.COM/INF.8B2,

2. Recalling Decisions 20 COM VIII.A, 41 COM 8B.3, 44 COM 7B.79, and 45 COM 7B.3 adopted at its 20th (Merida, 1996), 41st (Krakow, 2017), 44th Extended (Fuzhou/Online,2021), and 45th Extended (Riyadh, 2023) sessions respectively,

3. Approves the proposed minor boundary modification for **W-Arly-Pendjari Complex** (Benin/Burkina Faso/Niger).

Map 1: World Heritage property and proposed minor boundary modification