



IUCN
Rue Mauverney 28
1196 Gland
Switzerland

Tel. +41 22 999 0000
Fax +41 22 999 0002
www.iucn.org

H.E. Ms Margaret Baimanya Jah-Matturi
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Delegate
Permanent Delegation of Sierra Leone to UNESCO
Maison de l'UNESCO
Bureaux Bonvin N 5.39
1 Rue Miollis
Paris
75015
France

19 December 2024

IUCN Evaluation of Gola-Tiwai Complex – Interim Report and Request for Supplementary Information

Dear Ambassador,

Further to the above nomination to the World Heritage List, I am writing with information on progress with the IUCN evaluation. The IUCN World Heritage technical evaluation mission to Gola-Tiwai Complex was undertaken by Mrs. Sheila Ashong and Mr. Paul Ngafack in October 2024. The evaluators greatly appreciated the excellent support, organisation and co-operation provided by your authorities in the preparation and implementation of the mission, and the kind welcome throughout the mission. Please convey our sincere thanks to all of the officials, scientists and contributors that assisted the mission.

Following the field evaluation mission, the IUCN World Heritage Panel is in the course of examining World Heritage nominations for natural and mixed properties, and cultural landscapes. This process will conclude in March/April 2025, following which the IUCN evaluation report will be issued to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. The IUCN Panel examined in detail above-mentioned nomination, including reports of field evaluators and desktop reviews of external reviewers, as well as other references regarding the nominated properties.

The Panel greatly appreciated the State Party's efforts in relation to this nomination, and will be discussing the nomination again at its second meeting, to be held in March 2025. Based on the information available, the Panel considers that the nominated property holds a strong potential under biodiversity criteria (ix) and (x). However, the Panel also noted a number of points that would require supplementary information and would therefore be highly grateful if your authorities could:

- 1) Clarify through detailed maps the boundaries of the buffer zone for Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary, in line with paragraphs 99 and 132 of the *Operational Guidelines*. Due to the line thickness of the boundary lines and the scale of the maps provided in the nomination dossier, it currently does not appear to be possible to unambiguously discern the exact location of the buffer zone boundary and the status of the buffer zone in the south of Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary. IUCN suggests a technical meeting with State Party experts to advise on the precisions needed. IUCN would also be grateful to receive the GIS shapefiles of the boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone, if available;
- 2) Indicate through maps the potential dynamics of Moa River in relation to the boundaries of the nominated property and its proposed buffer zones, especially in regard to Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary;
- 3) Provide an overview of the implementation of the actions defined in the Interim Management Plan 2023-2025 for Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary and the Interim Management Plan for Gola Rainforest National Park;
- 4) Formally submit, as part of the supplementary information, the new Gola Rainforest National Park Management Plan 2024-2029, which was already shared with the mission team, to ensure that this new management plan is formally registered as part of the nomination dossier;
- 5) Provide the final management plan for Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary, or in case this plan is not yet available, an update on the finalization of this management plan, including a copy of the latest version of the draft and the firm schedule for its final approval and subsequent implementation;
- 6) Provide a summary on how the implementation of these management plans ensure:
 - a. An integrated management across all four nominated component parts;
 - b. Forest restoration in the buffer zone;
 - c. Mitigation of the threats identified in the nomination dossier.

In addition to these factual points, the Panel noted with concern that the buffer zone for Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary is very narrow compared to the buffer zone of the other nominated component parts, and thus appears to provide only limited protection against impacts from fisheries, pollution or invasive alien species. Therefore, the Panel would be grateful if the State Party could indicate their willingness to:

- 7) Expand the buffer zone of Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary to provide a similar layer of protection as the buffer zones of the other nominated component parts;
- 8) Explore options to strengthen the monitoring of threats to the nominated property and buffer zones, including through further strengthened engagement with local communities.

We would appreciate your response to the above points as soon as possible, in order to facilitate the evaluation process, but **no later than 28 February 2025**, as per paragraph 148 of the *Operational Guidelines*. Please note that any information submitted after this date will not be considered by IUCN in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee. It should be noted, however, that while IUCN will carefully consider any supplementary information submitted, it cannot properly evaluate a completely revised nomination or large amounts of new information submitted at the last minute. Therefore, we kindly ask your authorities to keep their response concise and to respond only to the above requests.

Supplementary information should also be submitted officially in two copies to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in order for it to be registered as part of the nomination. An electronic copy of all completed and submitted supplementary information to both the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Mr Alessandro Balsamo (a.balsamo@unesco.org) and IUCN Headquarters, Mr Clemens Küpper (clemens.kupper@iucn.org) would also be greatly appreciated. Taking into account your response, IUCN will formulate its final recommendation to the World Heritage Committee.

In the interest of ensuring full transparency and dialogue regarding the IUCN evaluation process, we are happy to respond to any questions you may wish to raise regarding IUCN's work on the World Heritage Convention, including the above points. We would be pleased to organise a meeting via conference call. Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Clemens Küpper, Programme Officer, Nominations and Strategy (clemens.kupper@iucn.org), if you have any questions regarding this request, or if you would wish to arrange a conference call to discuss this request.

Please allow me to reiterate our thanks for your support and for the conduct of IUCN's recent mission. We thank you for your cooperation in providing this very important information, which will facilitate the Panel in making its recommendations.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your kind cooperation in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, and I remain,

Yours sincerely,



Tim Badman
Director World Heritage