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State of Conservation Report for the Laponian Area, Sweden (774)

This report has been prepared and signed jointly by the Swedish National Heritage Board and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency which have a shared responsibility for the Laponian Area as a mixed cultural/natural World Heritage property.

Executive Summary of the report

In March of 2022, the Swedish Government granted an exploitation concession for the area Kallak K No. 1 for the right to extraction and utilization of iron with 12 attached conditions. In one of these conditions, the Swedish National Heritage Board and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency were given the task to ensure that any development takes account of the status of the Laponian Area as a World Heritage property.

An exploitation concession determines who has the right to extract the minerals but it does not give a right to start operations immediately. Instead, this requires a permit under the Swedish Environmental Code. The concession outlined a condition for the applicant to include an In-Depth Impact Assessment in accordance with the principles of the IUCN World Heritage Advice Note on Environmental Assessment (condition 12). This methodology has since been updated with the introduction of the new Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, which will be required for any major developments within and adjacent to World Heritage properties in Sweden.

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The mining concession was appealed to the Supreme Administrative Court in June 2022 by the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation and the Sami villages of Jåhkågasska and Sirges. However, the concession gained legal force on 25 June 2024 following a ruling by the Supreme Administrative Court to dismiss the appeal.

A joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission to the Laponian Area was conducted from 27-31 May 2024. It involved site visits and meetings with all the key stakeholders.

In October 2024, Jokkmokk Iron Mines AB, the company that was granted mining concession, initiated a consultation process for the environmental permit application and a consultation document where it confirms that it will conduct a World Heritage Impact Assessment in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context. The company has yet to make a formal application for a permit.

Several potential and current conservation issues were observed in the Fourth Cycle of the Periodic Reporting in 2023. In particular, climate change and general anthropogenic influence can separately and together affect flora, fauna and cultural heritage in the Laponian Area.

Furthermore, several specific factors affecting the Laponian Area were outlined in the periodic reporting with a number of planned developments that could potentially impact on the property's outstanding universal value, such as electric power lines inside and outside of the property.

1. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

Brief background (in response to para. 4, 5 and 6)

The Laponian Area World Heritage property is located in the Arctic Circle region of northern Sweden, covering approximately 940,900 hectares. Its uniqueness lies in the intersection of culture and nature, demonstrating a spectacular landscape and a unique living culture with traditional practice of reindeer husbandry by the Sami. The Laponian Area was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1996 based on cultural criteria (iii) and (v) and natural criteria (vii), (viii) and (ix).

The property is managed by *Laponiatjuottjudus*, which is Sámi for Laponia Administration, having taken over responsibility for management of the Laponian Area from Norrbotten County Administrative Board on 1 January 2013. It is governed by the Laponia Ordinance (*Laponiaförordningen 2011:840*), which has been renewed several times since its adoption in 2011. It is effective until 30 June 2026. The Board of *Laponiatjuottjudus* consists of the Sámi communities in

Laponia, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, the County Administrative Board in Norrbotten County and the municipalities of Jokkmokk and Gällivare. Recently, the Swedish Government has commissioned the Swedish Agency for Public Management to review the existing protection and management measures to secure sustainable, efficient and long-term conservation of the property.

In March of 2022, the Swedish Government granted an exploitation concession for the right to extraction and utilization of iron in Kallak, also called Gállok, based on 12 conditions. The overall aim of the conditions is to ensure that the outstanding universal value of the property is maintained. One of the conditions stipulated that the company concerned must engage in dialogue with the Swedish National Heritage Board and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency to ensure that any development takes account of the status of the Laponian Area as a World Heritage property (condition 9).

The concession area is at its closest point some 35 kilometres south-west of the Laponian Area World Heritage property. However, the area concerned has been identified as a national interest for reindeer husbandry intended for reindeer grazing and migration routes. In addition, it overlaps with an area of national interest for minerals.

In June 2022, the mining concession was appealed to the Supreme Administrative Court by the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation and the Sami villages of Jåhkågasska and Sirges (case number: 3893-22). The Swedish Government made a submission to the Supreme Administrative Court on 18 January 2024 confirming that it stands by the decision of the exploitation concession for Kallak K. The concession gained legal force on 25 June 2024 following a ruling by the Supreme Administrative Court to dismiss the appeal.

Sweden welcomed the decision of the World Heritage Committee concerning the Laponian Area (46 COM 7B.45) at its 46th Session of the World Heritage Committee Meeting in July 2024 in New Delhi. The Swedish delegation made a brief intervention after the decision was adopted and reiterated that while an exploitation concession determines who has the right to extract the minerals the mining operations require a permit under the Swedish Environmental Code. Furthermore, in a letter addressed to the Director of the World Heritage Centre

dated to 18 October 2024 the Swedish National Heritage Board confirmed Sweden's commitment to comply with the decision.

Request for a revised Impact Assessment (in response to para. 7, 8, 11 and 12)

In addition to the requirement for a dialogue process, as mentioned above, the exploitation concession outlined a condition for the applicant to include an in-depth impact assessment in accordance with the principles of the IUCN World Heritage Advice Note on Environmental Assessment (condition 12).

Since the introduction of the new Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context in 2022, the national authorities concerned have been promoting this document as a tool replacing both the IUCN World Heritage Advice Note on Environmental Assessment and the ICOMOS Guidelines on Heritage Impact Assessment from 2011. This is in line with the Committee's request for the State Party "to ensure that a revised impact assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed Kallak mine on the OUV of the property is completed in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context ... prior to making any decision that would be difficult to reverse, including in relation to the Environmental Permit that would be required for the mining operation to proceed" (para. 7).

The Jokkmokk Iron Mines AB initiated a consultation process for the environmental permit application in October 2024 in which the consultation document stated that a World Heritage Impact Assessment will be conducted in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context. The Consultation Document for the Environmental Permit for the Kallak or Gállok Iron Ore Project was forwarded to the World Heritage Centre on 8 October 2024. As requested by the Committee the impact assessment and any other relevant documents such as a Terms of Reference for the revised impact assessment (para. 8) will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to any decisions relating to the environmental permit. The company has yet to make a formal application for a permit.

In its submission on the Consultation Document, the Swedish National Heritage Board stressed the need for a comprehensive description and analysis of the OUV and attributes of the property in close dialogue with the site management organisation for the Laponian Area. The submission also emphasised the need to

consider both direct and indirect impacts of the planned development on the property. Furthermore, it pointed out the necessity to address cumulative impacts of other developments as well as the recommendations of the Reactive Monitoring Mission report (para. 11 and 12).

Impacts of other developments (in response to para. 10, and 13)

As concerns the planned extensions of the national grids, Svenska kraftnät submitted on 3 January 2024 an application to the Swedish Energy Markets Inspectorate for permission to extend the grid between Porjusberget and Naalobjärvi (Vitåfors). This is connected to a planned Hydrogen Plant for the production of fossil-free steel. This project was mentioned in the periodic report for the Laponian Area in 2023 (para. 13). An extension of grid between Naalobjärvi-Messaure is also planned (para. 10). Legally required consultations with stakeholders are being undertaken, and the permit application to the Swedish Energy Markets Inspectorate is scheduled for 2026. The grid may potentially be extended from Gällivare municipality to Kiruna municipality at a later stage.

We fully endorse the need for the Committee to consider the recommendations of the Reactive Monitoring Mission report prior to any decisions concerning developments which may impact negatively on the OUV of the Laponian Area. The Swedish National Heritage Board recently informed the Swedish Energy Markets Inspectorate (SEMI) of this requirement concerning the planned extension of the national grids within the World Heritage property (para. 13).

Concerning the upgrading of a wind turbine, or "windmill" as mentioned in the periodic reporting, we have not been able to confirm any on-going plans for such a development (para. 10).

Reactive Monitoring Mission (in response to para 3)

Sweden noted and welcomed the decision of the World Heritage Committee in 2023 (45 COM 7B.32) to request a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission to the Laponian Area at its 45th Session of the World Heritage Committee Meeting in Riyadh. Thereafter, the Swedish National Heritage Board sent an invitation letter dated to 19 October 2023 for a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission (RMM) to the Laponian Area.

The Reactive Monitoring Mission took place from 27 to 31 May 2024 with meetings conducted in multiple locations: Naturum Laponia Visitor Centre at Stora

Sjöfallet/Stuor Muorkke National Park, Jokkmokk and Stockholm. The programme included meetings with representatives from the following organisations: the Sámi villages of Sirges, Tuorpon and Jåhkågasska tjiellde; Randijaur local community; Swedish Society for Nature Conservation; Jokkmokk Iron Mines AB; Svenska Kraftnät (Swedish Energy Transmission); Jokkmokk Municipality; Norrbotten County Administrative Board; the Sámi Association in Sweden; and Svemin (industry association of mines, mineral and metal producers). Furthermore, a joint meeting was organised between the mission team and representatives of the national authorities concerned: Swedish National Heritage Board; Swedish Environmental Protection Agency; Mining Inspectorate of Sweden; Sami Parliament; and Swedish National Commission for UNESCO. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the role of national authorities in World Heritage management and the conditions attached with the mining concession, as well as legal provisions on the process ahead (e.g. interpretation of the concession conditions, the environmental permit and judicial review). Furthermore, a site visit to Gállok/Kallak, the location of the proposed mine, was organised and a helicopter tour of the Laponian Area was arranged with local guides who described values attached to the landscape.

The mission was successfully implemented through meticulous planning in collaboration with all the key stakeholders, both organisations and individuals, who contributed to the planning, participation and implementation of the RMM. Planning for the mission was led by the Swedish National Heritage Board in close collaboration with the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, the Site Manager for the Laponian Area, the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and IUCN. The Swedish authorities covered the full mission costs within Sweden as a way to minimize expenditure of the World Heritage Fund.

Rights of Sami (in response to para 2 and 9)

The Committee decision pointed to the concerns raised by the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the UN Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment in relation to the free, prior and informed consent of the Sami.

Specific measures have been incorporated into the concession conditions for a potential mine to counteract as far as possible any negative impact on reindeer husbandry. The conditions are aimed at ensuring that operations use as little land

as possible (condition 3), compensating the reindeers herding communities concerned (conditions 4 and 5), and facilitating reindeer migration past the concession area as far as possible (condition 6).

There are also conditions concerning consultations with the Sami reindeer herding communities and the Sami Parliament. The latter is an elected parliament and a State agency regulated by the Sami Parliament Act (1992:1433). The company concerned must engage in regular consultations that aim at consensus with the Jåhkågasska Tjiellde, Sirges and Tuorpon reindeer herding communities in order to assess the need for measures and resources to prevent any disruptions to reindeer husbandry. The company must also present an annual report of the consultations conducted to the Sami Parliament, the Norrbotten County Administrative Board and the Chief Mining Inspector (condition 8).

In addition, the required impact assessment will need to address the rights of the Sami as Indigenous Peoples in line with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, as well as measures to ensure that the practice of reindeer husbandry is adequately protected given its integral part of the property's outstanding universal value (criteria iii and v). Furthermore, this is underpinned by the Act (2022:66) on consultation on issues concerning the Sami, which came into force on 1 March 2022. It provides specific consultation provisions concerning Sami rights to influence over matters affecting them.

3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State(s) Party(ies) which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value

In the Fourth Cycle of the Periodic Reporting, submitted to UNESCO in 2023, several potential and current conservation issues were observed. In particular, climate change and general anthropogenic influence can separately and together affect flora, fauna and cultural heritage in the Laponian Area.

Climate change has a negative effect on the sensitive northern flora and fauna. Species that are adapted to warmer climate spread further north outcompeting sensitive arctic fauna and flora. Temperature increases leads to the forest border moving upwards, resulting in bush and tree vegetation on higher altitudes, as well as glacial melting with snow and slush slides due to faster melt off. Even high alpine specialized species might be affected in the long term. More extreme

changes in weather and snow coverage make it more difficult for reindeers and other animals to find food during the winter.

Driving with off-road vehicles is a problem in parts of the World Heritage property as it damages the sensitive vegetation. However, driving is often related to the reindeer husbandry, which forms part of the outstanding universal value.

4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity.

Several specific factors affecting the Laponian Area were outlined in the fourth cycle of the periodic reporting. A number of planned developments could potentially impact on the property's outstanding universal value, such as electric power lines inside and outside of the property.

Plans for Extension of National Grid to Gällivare and Kiruna by Svenska kraftnät

There are plans for reinforcement of the transmission grid between Gällivare and Kiruna. The line between Porjusberget and Vitåfors, which has come furthest in the process, largely runs within the Stubba nature reserve, which is part of the World Heritage property. The energy company, Svenska kraftnät, submitted a concession application for the line between Porjusberget and Vitåfors to the Swedish Energy Markets Inspectorate on 3 January 2024. The company will also need to get a permit from the Land and Environment Court for any activities or measures that may have a significant impact on the natural environment in a Natura 2000 protected area.

Plans for Extension of National Grid to Naalojärvi-Messaure

A second powerline is being planned through the Stubba nature reserve. The project is in its early stage of planning and a consultation process is underway to determine any potential impact on the Laponian Area.

Permission to test drill in the vicinity at Allivaara

The Mining Inspectorate of Sweden has on 30 September 2024 granted permission for an exploration permit for test drilling in an area of 2 329,58 ha in Allivaara, Gällivare municipality, in the immediate vicinity of Lina fjällurskog nature reserve and the Laponian Area World Heritage property. The company will search for various minerals and assess the profitability of possible mining activities in the area. If the company would deem mining profitable, the next step would be to apply for an exploitation concession according to the same rules as are described above for the Kallak mine. The Swedish National Heritage Board and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency have not been informed of the application or that a permission would be granted.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

This report may be uploaded on the UNESCO website.

6. Signature of the Authority



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Head of Department
Swedish National Heritage Board

Sara Beckman
Deputy Head of Department
Swedish Environmental Protection
Agency

Copy:

Ministry of Culture (Sweden)
Ministry of Climate and Enterprise (Sweden)
Swedish Environmental Protection Agency
Mining Inspectorate of Sweden
Sami Parliament (Sweden)
County Administrative Board of Norrbotten
Laponiatjuottjudus (Laponia Administration)
Svenska kraftnät
Jokkmokk Ironmines AB
Sweden's Permanent Delegation to UNESCO
Swedish National Commission for UNESCO
ICOMOS Sweden