

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Forty-seventh session UNESCO, Paris 6 – 16 July 2025

Item 7B of the Provisional Agenda: State of conservation of properties inscribed on the of World Heritage List

Summary

This document contains information on the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. The World Heritage Committee is requested to review the reports on the state of conservation of properties contained in this document. The full reports of Reactive Monitoring missions requested by the World Heritage Committee are available at the following Web address in their original language: <u>http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/47COM/documents</u>

All previous state of conservation reports will be available through the World Heritage State of conservation Information System at the following Web address: <u>http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc</u>

Decision required: The World Heritage Committee may wish to adopt the draft Decision presented at the end of each state of conservation report.

Note: For each section, the reports are presented in the English alphabetical order of States Parties.

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I. STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORTS

NATURAL PROPERTIES

EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

19. Białowieża Forest (Belarus, Poland)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 1979

Criteria (ix)(x)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger N/A

Previous Committee Decisions see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/33/documents/

International Assistance Requests approved: 0 Total amount approved: USD 0 For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/33/assistance/

<u>UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds</u> N/A

<u>Previous monitoring missions</u> March 2004, October 2008, September/October 2018 and March 2024: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring missions; June 2016: IUCN Advisory mission

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- Forestry/wood production (logging in the partially protected zones and removal of deadwood)
- Alterations of the hydrological regime
- Border fence impeding mammal movements
- Ambiguity regarding the boundaries of the property (issue resolved)
- Management systems/management plan (lack of an Integrated Management Plan for the Polish component of the property; lack of a Transboundary Management Plan for the property and of a Transboundary Steering Committee with adequate human and financial resources)
- Financial resources
- Human resources
- Illegal activities
- Invasive/alien terrestrial species

Illustrative material see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/33/

Current conservation issues

On 31 January and 4 February 2025, the States Parties of Poland and Belarus respectively submitted separate reports on the state of conservation of the property, available at <u>https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/33/documents/</u>. Both reports confirm that transboundary cooperation, including the development of a Transboundary Management Plan (TMP), has not resumed due to the ongoing political situation. The reports also provide the following information:

Belarus:

- Scientific research conducted in 2024 within Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park (BPNP) is expected to inform recommendations for optimising wild ungulate populations by end of 2025; these efforts could be part of a joint approach across the entire property. In 2024, a ban on wolf hunting within the Belarus part of the property was enacted, in accordance with the BPNP management plan (MP);
- In relation to hydrology, an Action Plan was developed for the management of the Dikoye Fen Mire, which is partially located within the property; priority measures have been implemented to restore the disrupted hydrological regime across 5,000 ha, including the construction of dams on artificial channels. Habitat restoration has been undertaken for the Aquatic Warbler (*Acrocephalus paludicola*), and a separate project has been developed to restore sections of the Narewka River, with implementation planned for 2025;
- Concerning habitat fragmentation, the draft Forest Management Plan (FMP) excludes activities such as the clearing of forest roads and glades across approximately 50,000 hectares, and artificial reforestation has been excluded in 12,000 hectares of non-forested areas to preserve habitat mosaic;
- An English translation of the draft BPNP MP will be submitted in 2025;
- Concerns are reiterated regarding the border barrier infrastructure and the potential inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

Poland:

- Measures to monitor and mitigate impacts of the border barrier on ecological integrity are ongoing; these include installing larger culverts to restore water flow, monitoring lynx populations, managing and eliminating Invasive Alien Species (IAS) near the border, and related training activities. The request by the Committee to establish a dedicated monitoring and adaptive management capacity to mitigate noise and light pollution, and edge effects will be analysed;
- Plans are underway to increase ecosystem resilience by addressing other stressors. A working group is being formed to explore a long-term research and monitoring programme, with a particular focus on the border barrier, climate change and IAS. Border barrier impact monitoring continues;
- The draft Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for the part of the property located in Poland has been revised in line with the 2024 World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission and Committee recommendations. The annexed version is in Polish, with an English translation expected shortly. Stakeholder consultations are ongoing, including for the revised Forest Fire Protection and Suppression Plan (FFPSP), particularly regarding zoning and permitted activities. An expert opinion analysing the impact of the border barrier on mammals and invasive plant species has been commissioned and includes recommendations to mitigate these impacts. The economic feasibility of incorporating the expert findings into the IMP is under review. Finalisation of the IMP is expected by the end of 2025;
- The proposed zoning changes do not expand the active protection zone. FMPs remain suspended pending approval of the IMP;
- Traffic on Narewkowska road is monitored, with further mitigation measures under consideration. Hydrology management continues, alongside decommissioning of 117 km of roads and removal of 36 km of fencing to reduce habitat fragmentation;
- Sustainable tourism and development are addressed in the draft IMP. Additional conservation concerns include fire risk and pressures linked to human migration through the property, such as resource use and unauthorised fires;
- Construction and extension of road No.687 within the property involved the "transfer" of 2.5 hectares of forest.
- Further border infrastructure expansion is being avoided by strengthening the existing barrier and upgrading the technical road along the border, thereby reducing the use of internal roads in the property;
- 'The East Shield' border defence system is planned for 2024-2028, to enhance Poland's border security through the establishment of a border defence infrastructure system, including

construction of fortifications and terrain obstacles. The Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property will be considered during planning and implementation. Where feasible, existing natural terrain will be used, environmental impacts minimised, and environmental improvements pursued (e.g., forest road removal, wetland restoration);

On 2 August 2024, the World Heritage Centre transmitted a letter to the State Party of Poland regarding the announced Polish National Defence and Deterrence Plan ('East Shield') and its potential to exacerbate existing threats to the state of conservation of the property. A response was provided as part of the State Party's state of conservation report, as summarised above.

On 10 March 2025, at the request of the State Party of Poland, a meeting was held with the World Heritage Centre and IUCN to discuss the IMP for the Polish part of the property. Subsequently, on 23 April 2025, the State Party transmitted the draft IMP to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN

The continued impact of the geopolitical situation on the overall management of the transboundary property remains of serious concern. In particular, the lack of transboundary cooperation between the States Parties of Belarus and Poland, the border barrier and associated infrastructure impacting ecological connectivity and the integrity of the property, as well as the passage of migrants through the property, are noted as significant threats.

It is recommended that transboundary cooperation be re-established as soon as feasible, at least at the technical level. While the full restoration of ecological connectivity remains the ultimate objective, it is important that mitigation measures are effectively implemented in the interim to address impacts of the border infrastructure. This aligns with the recommendations of the 2024 mission and the Committee's previous decisions, and is critical to ensure that the property is no longer faced with threats which could have deleterious effects on its inherent characteristics, as defined in Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines, and therefore meeting the criteria for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger. In this regard, it is positive that the State Party of Poland has initiated several mitigation actions, including measures to address localised impacts on hydrology, lynx population monitoring to inform broader management decisions, control of IAS in the border area, integration of border barrier impacts in the revised IMP, and steps to avoid expansion of the existing barrier infrastructure. These measures should be continued and fully implemented, alongside further action to establish the requested monitoring and adaptive management capacity to stressors, and to establish a comprehensive, long-term research and monitoring programme on the property's OUV.

The ongoing revision of the IMP for the part of the property located in Poland to incorporate considerations related to border infrastructure, Forest Management Plans, and a new zoning proposal is welcomed. As public consultation continues, it is noted that the IMP is anticipated for completion in 2025 and that the draft submitted to the World Heritage Centre in April 2025 will be reviewed by IUCN in due course. In accordance with the Committee's previous request, all habitat management operations should remain consistent with the 2014 nomination dossier. It is also noted that the new zonation proposal does not expand the area under active forest protection zone, the FMPs remain on hold pending the IMP's finalisation, and the revised FFPSP is under public consultation.

While proposed mitigation measures for the Narewkowska road in Poland are noted, further detailed information is required regarding the reported approval in 2024 of the construction and expansion of road No.687 within the property, specifically regarding potential impacts on its OUV.

Measures reported by the State Party of Belarus are positively noted, including the continuation of scientific research in BPNP, the introduction of a legal ban on wolf hunting in the part of the property located in Belarus, and ongoing efforts to restore hydrological connectivity and habitat quality. The exclusion of forest road and glade clearing from draft FMPs is also positive.

Both States Parties report ongoing activities related to hydrology, research and monitoring (e.g., lynx in Poland; ungulates in Belarus), habitat fragmentation reduction through decommissioning of roads and fences and habitat restoration, and sustainable development, which align with the recommendations of the 2024 mission. These efforts should be sustained, and the finalised BPNP MP transmitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN.

While acknowledging that the 'East Shield' project is being implemented by Poland as part of national security measures, and that the State Party has indicated consideration of the property's OUV, there remain serious concerns regarding the project's potential impact on the property's integrity, which has

already been compromised by the existing border infrastructure. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) should therefore be undertaken as a matter of priority and submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN before any further decisions or works are undertaken. In summary, while initial steps are being taken by both States Parties to address the Committee's decisions and the mission recommendations, implementation is still at an early stage. Further progress is needed to ensure comprehensive action, including the re-establishment of effective transboundary cooperation, at least at the technical level, for the long-term conservation of the property.

Draft Decision: 47 COM 7B.19

- 1. <u>Having examined</u> Document WHC/25/47.COM/7B.Add.5,
- 2. <u>Recalling</u> Decisions **45 COM 7B.21** and **46 COM 7B.50**, adopted at its extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023) and 46th (New Delhi, 2024) sessions respectively,
- 3. <u>Notes with concern</u> that the ongoing geopolitical situation continues to impact the effective protection and management of the transboundary property as a whole, including through border barriers, associated infrastructure and security operations in the part of the property in Poland, which exacerbate ecological fragmentation initiated by the existing barrier in Belarus, as well as through the lack of transboundary cooperation and continued human migration through the property;
- 4. <u>Expresses its utmost concern</u> regarding the potential impacts of the planned implementation of the 'East Shield' project in and near the property in Poland, and <u>recalls</u> the need to assess the potential impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property through an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, and to submit this to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN prior to any decision;
- 5. <u>Reiterates</u> that restoring ecological connectivity across the entire property is essential to safeguard its OUV, and that this would require modifying or partly dismantling barrier infrastructure, <u>reiterates its concern</u> that such actions are unlikely in the short to medium term without renewed transboundary cooperation, and <u>urges</u> the States Parties to take all possible steps to achieve restoration of ecological connectivity as early as possible;
- 6. <u>Further recalls</u> that the loss of ecological connectivity threatens the property's integrity and biodiversity, and that a new Reactive Monitoring mission would be required in 2027 to assess the implementation of the recommendations of the 2024 mission and reevaluate whether the property still faces threats which could have deleterious effects on its inherent characteristics, as defined in Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines, and <u>notes</u> that decisive urgent action is required to prevent such outcome;
- 7. <u>Further notes</u> the mitigation measures initiated by the State Party of Poland to address the impacts of the border infrastructure, including actions on hydrology, lynx monitoring, invasive species control, and the update of the Integrated Management Plan (IMP) to include border barrier impacts, and <u>also urges</u> the State Party of Poland to continue and fully implement all mitigation measures, including the establishment of a comprehensive long-term research and monitoring programme on the property's OUV in order to allow for adaptive management of the threats and impacts of the border barrier and its associated infrastructure;

- 8. <u>Reiterates its request</u> to the States Parties of Poland and Belarus to resume, to the extent possible, transboundary cooperation, at least at the technical information exchange level, in order to facilitate the development and implementation of the recommended mitigation measures;
- 9. <u>Notes with appreciation</u> that the ongoing revision of the draft IMP for the part of the property located in Poland to reflect the recommendations of the Committee, including the integration of border security issues and alignment of Forest Management Plans (FMP) with the protection of the property's OUV, and <u>requests</u> the State Party of Poland to finalise the IMP following review of the draft by IUCN;
- 10. <u>Further notes with appreciation</u> the legal ban on wolf hunting in the part of the property located in Belarus and the ongoing scientific work to inform the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park management plan, and <u>further requests</u> the State Party of Belarus to transmit the English translation of the draft plan to the World Heritage Centre for IUCN review;
- 11. <u>Takes note</u> that the new zonation proposal in Poland does not expand the active forest protection zone, that FMPs remain on hold pending finalisation of the IMP, and that the Forest Fire Prevention and Suppression Plan (FFPSP) has been revised and is under consultation, and <u>also reiterates its request</u> to the State Party of Poland to ensure that all habitat management in the property complies with the management arrangements described in the 2014 nomination dossier, including that the undisturbed wild nature is the basic principle for the management, by:
 - a) Ensuring that the new zonation fully complies with the principles detailed in the 2014 nomination dossier and does not increase the active forest protection zone,
 - b) Ensuring that new FMPs justify all proposed interventions in line with the 2024 mission recommendations,
 - c) Revising the proposed FFPSP prior to its incorporation into the IMP to resolve any inconsistencies with the recommendations of the 2018 mission and management arrangements described in the 2014 nomination dossier;
- 12. <u>Also takes note</u> that additional measures are being considered for the Narewkowska road, <u>also expresses concern</u> regarding the reported approval of the construction and expansion of road No. 687 within the property in 2024, and <u>requests furthermore</u> the State Party of Poland to provide further details on this road development, including an assessment of any potential negative impacts on the property's OUV;
- 13. <u>Further notes with appreciation</u> actions by both States Parties to restore hydrological processes, reduce habitat fragmentation, and undertake ecological monitoring, and <u>further reiterates its request</u> to both States Parties to fully implement the remaining recommendations of the 2024 mission, in particular to:
 - a) Reinitiate the work on developing a Transboundary Management Plan and coordinate transboundary management actions to address the different conservation challenges of the property,
 - b) Undertake a new scientific evaluation of bison and red deer ecological carrying capacity for the entire property and implications for management of dispersal, migration and range expansion movements within and outside the property,
 - c) Bring wildlife management in the property better in line with undisturbed ecological processes as outlined in the mission recommendations,

- d) Continue and further increase efforts to restore the natural hydrology of the property and include the research, monitoring and adaptation to climate change as a core guiding principle in all management planning,
- e) Implement measures to further reduce habitat fragmentation by avoiding any further upgrading of roads, significantly reducing the number of forestry roads and the number of forestry fences,
- f) Develop a vision on how the property can contribute to sustainable development of the surrounding region, based on a clear sustainable tourism strategy compatible with the protection of the OUV;
- 14. <u>Finally requests</u> the States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2026**, an updated joint report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 48th session.

31. Doñana National Park (Spain)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 1994

Criteria (vii)(ix)(x)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger N/A

Previous Committee Decisions see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/685/documents/

International Assistance Requests approved: 0 Total amount approved: USD 0 For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/685/assistance/

<u>UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds</u> N/A

Previous monitoring missions

1998: World Heritage Centre Advisory mission; 1999, 2001, 2004: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN/Ramsar missions (Doñana 2005 expert meetings on Hydrological Restoration of Wetlands); January 2011: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission and Ramsar Advisory mission; January 2015: IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission; February 2020: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN/Ramsar Reactive Monitoring mission

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- Oil and gas (Potential impacts from infrastructural projects in the vicinity of the property, including gas storage)
- Mining (Proposed re-opening of Aznalcóllar mine upstream of the property)
- Water infrastructure (Proposed upgrading of a dam upstream of the property)
- Water (extraction) (Unsustainable use of water with impacts on the Doñana aquifer)
- Water infrastructure (Dredging of the Guadalquivir River)

Illustrative material see page <u>https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/685/</u>

Current conservation issues

On 15 December 2024, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report, available at <u>https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/685/documents/</u>, reporting as follows:

- A proposal for monitoring indicators to assess the state of conservation of the property has been submitted. These cover variables such as wetlands extent, floodable areas, groundwater levels, and key species including the Iberian lynx and migratory waterbirds;
- The annual report by the Guadalquivir Hydrographic Confederation on the Doñana aquifer notes that three of five groundwater bodies are in poor quantitative condition, primarily due to over-exploitation;
- Measures are being implemented to address these issues, including halting the expansion of eligible areas for water concessions, closing illegal wells, and removing non-compliant irrigation systems. As of November 2024, 296 wells had been sealed, 203 were in the process of being sealed, and proceedings for 18 wells had been suspended due to ongoing litigation;
- Research projects are underway to determine the water extraction capacity of different bodies, and plans are also in place to repair the water supply network and reduce leakages. Additionally, a study examining the groundwater bodies' behaviour and their impact on Habitats of Community Interest within Doñana is expected to conclude by mid-2025;
- Progress on the development of an ecohydrological model is ongoing but has been slower than anticipated;
- Groundwater governance is being reinforced through the establishment of Groundwater User Communities (CUMAS, by its acronym in Spanish);
- The Guadalquivir Hydrological Plan (2021-2027) was approved in 2023 and is accompanied by a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) that includes a dedicated chapter addressing the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property;
- Studies on the lagoon-aquifer relationship confirm a strong hydrological connectivity and shifting hydroperiods, primarily driven by climate change-induced reductions in rainfall and rising temperatures. Modelling predicts increased frequency of lagoon drying events;
- The first draft of the Climate Change Adaptation Programme is expected by mid-2025;
- While a decline in wintering waterbirds has been observed, largely attributed to regional climate trends, six of seven endangered waterbird species successfully bred in 2023 and 2024;
- The Veta La Palma estate (7,600 hectares), acquired by the Junta de Andalucía in 2023, was annexed to the National Park to support biodiversity. Public management of the ponds began in 2024, shifting the area's use from aquaculture to wetland biodiversity conservation, especially for waterbirds;
- A total of 74,282.24 hectares belonging to Doñana National Park and its Protection Zones are planned to be submitted as a proposed buffer zone for the property;
- A 2023 agreement for Doñana's conservation aims to reinforce the implementation of the Special Management Plan for the Irrigable Areas North of the Doñana Forest Crown (PEOCFD), with over €1.4 billion earmarked for water infrastructure, habitat restoration, socio-economic transition, and support for sustainable agriculture and tourism;
- There are no plans to reopen the former Aznalcóllar mine; however, a new mining project by the concessioner 'Mina Los Frailes', located 42 kilometres from the property, is currently in the final approval phase;

On 27 January 2025, the State Party submitted additional information regarding the 'Mina Los Frailes' project at Aznalcóllar, including a specific assessment of its impacts on the World Heritage property, concluding its compatibility with the conservation of the property.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN

The over-exploitation of groundwater in Doñana remains a critical concern. Despite the State Party's ongoing measures, including the cessation of new water concessions and the sealing of 296 illegal wells, the report indicates that three out of five groundwater bodies remain in poor quantitative condition, highlighting that the persistent pressure on the aquifer is yet to be alleviated. The situation calls for reinforced action by the State Party to accurately assess recharge rates, establish sustainable extraction thresholds, and improve enforcement mechanisms.

In this regard, progress in establishing CUMAS marks an essential step towards the development and implementation of abstraction plans. Their full effectiveness will depend on timely operationalisation, robust regulatory support, and integration with hydrological modelling and monitoring systems.

The slow progress in developing the ecohydrological model is a cause for concern. This model is crucial for understanding the interactions between groundwater and surface water, particularly in the context of climate change. While technical challenges are acknowledged, the delay indicates that it has not been prioritised adequately. Accelerating this work is vital, not only to inform adaptative management strategies but also to support the effective functioning of CUMAS and other water governance mechanisms. Additional resources should be allocated to expedite the model's development and to bolster related conservation measures and research.

The approval of the Guadalquivir Hydrological Plan (2021-2027), informed by the SEA that includes a dedicated chapter addressing the property's OUV, is a welcome step forward as it lays the groundwork for more integrated and coordinated water management across the basin.

Similarly, the forthcoming Climate Change Adaptation Programme, with a first draft expected in mid-2025, represents a critical tool for strengthening the property's resilience. However, given the already observable impacts of climate change, any further delay in its implementation would heighten the vulnerability of the property. The State Party is therefore encouraged to expedite both the finalisation and operationalisation of the programme.

The decline in wintering waterbirds populations, attributed to climate change and broader regional trends, remains a serious concern. While the successful breeding of several endangered waterbird species in 2023 and 2024 is encouraging, the overall downward trend points to sustained ecological stress within the property, which underscores the urgent need for accelerated and coordinated conservation measures. The acquisition of Veta La Palma estate by the Junta of Andalucia and its transition from aquaculture to biodiversity-focused management regime is a notable achievement. Nevertheless, the long-term effectiveness of this initiative will depend on how well it is integrated into the broader conservation strategy for the property.

The submission of monitoring indicators by the State Party is a welcome and necessary development towards a more systematic approach to tracking the conservation status of the property. The identification of more than 100 variables is promising, yet the current framework requires further refinement. Specifically, the inclusion of measurable thresholds, clearly defined conservation targets, and established baseline data is essential to enable informed management interventions and transparent reporting on the state of conservation.

The proposal to establish a buffer zone constitutes another important step in mitigating external pressures on the property. However, the potential risks associated with the new Aznalcóllar mining project ('Mina Los Frailes') require thorough and precautionary scrutiny. Although the project lies outside the property and has been deemed compatible with conservation goals by the State Party, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the emergency preparedness plan were not submitted to the World Heritage Centre, as requested in Decision **45 COM 7B.97**. The separate impact assessment submitted as additional information does not offer a comprehensive evaluation of the potential impact on the OUV of the property, lacks a robust analysis of alternatives, notably the "no project" scenario, and refers to documents that have not been made available for review. In the absence of these critical materials, it is not possible to ascertain whether the project is indeed compatible with the property's OUV. The State Party therefore should be urged to submit the complete EIA and associated documentation for review before any final approval is granted.

With regard to the declining condition of the Doñana aquifer, should the rapid and effective implementation of conservation actions fail to reverse this trend, continued degradation could cause significant adverse impacts on the OUV of the property and have deleterious effects on its inherent characteristics, in conformity with Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines, and hence, potentially meeting the criteria for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

Draft Decision: 47 COM 7B.31

- 1. <u>Having examined</u> Document WHC/25/47.COM/7B.Add.5,
- <u>Recalling</u> Decisions 37 COM 7B.27, 38 COM 7B.79, 39 COM 7B.26, 41 COM 7B.9, 43 COM 7B.20, 44 COM 7B.191 and 45 COM 7B.97 adopted at its 37th (Phnom Penh, 2013), 38th (Doha, 2014), 39th (Bonn, 2015), 41st (Krakow, 2017), 43rd (Baku, 2019), extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021) and extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023) sessions respectively,
- 3. <u>Welcomes</u> the State Party's ongoing efforts to enhance the protection of the property, including the continued closure of illegal wells, the suspension of new water concessions within the aquifer, and improved coordination among institutions at national, regional and hydrological basin levels to ensure the coherent implementation of conservation and water management measures;
- 4. <u>Notes with utmost concern</u> that three of five groundwater bodies remain in poor quantitative condition due to ongoing over-exploitation, and <u>reiterates its request</u> to the State Party to fully implement all recommendations of the 2020 Reactive monitoring mission, as a matter of urgency, particularly those related to assessing groundwater recharge rates and establishing enforceable and sustainable extraction thresholds;
- <u>Also welcomes</u> the progress towards establishing Groundwater User Communities (CUMAS) and <u>encourages</u> the State Party to ensure their full and timely operationalisation, supported by a clear legal framework and integration into the property's hydrological management system;
- 6. <u>Notes with appreciation</u> the submission of a draft system of monitoring indicators to assess the state of conservation of the property, also <u>encourages</u> the State Party to further refine these indicators to ensure alignment with the attributes conveying the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), including through the development of clear baselines, measurable thresholds and conservation targets, and <u>requests</u> the State Party to submit the finalised indicators to the World Heritage Centre, for review by IUCN and to ensure their integration into the property's management and monitoring frameworks;
- 7. <u>Further welcomes</u> the transition of Veta La Palma estate from aquaculture to biodiversityoriented management, and <u>further encourages</u> the State Party to ensure its full integration into the broader conservation strategy for the property;
- 8. <u>Notes positively</u> the State Party's intention to establish a buffer zone and <u>encourages</u> <u>furthermore</u> the State Party to finalise and submit a proposal of a Minor Boundary Modification to the World Heritage Centre as a matter of priority;
- 9. <u>Regrets</u> the slow progress in the development of the ecohydrological model, <u>recalls</u> the need to clarify the relationship between hydrology and ecology to define the property's water requirements for maintaining its OUV, and therefore <u>urges again</u> the State Party to expedite the model's development in line with the recommendations of the 2020 Reactive monitoring mission to inform adaptive management and climate resilience measures;
- 10. <u>Also regrets</u> the delay in finalising the Climate Change Adaptation Programme, and <u>also</u> <u>reiterates its request</u> to the State Party to develop and implement a strategic plan that

addresses projected climate impacts, including concrete adaptation and mitigation measures and water use reduction targets required to maintain the property's OUV;

- 11. <u>Expresses its utmost concern</u> regarding the continued decline in wintering waterbird populations, and <u>also requests</u> the State Party to develop and implement a targeted conservation strategy to reverse this trend and safeguard the ecological integrity of the property;
- 12. <u>Further regrets</u> that, although the new Aznalcóllar mining project ('Mina Los Frailes') is in the final stages of the authorisation process, the information submitted to the World Heritage Centre remains insufficient to assess its potential impact on the OUV of the property, and <u>further requests</u> the State Party to submit the complete Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), including a specific assessment of the project's potential impacts on the OUV of the property, in line with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN, prior to any final or irreversible decisions being taken;
- 13. <u>Reiterates its view</u> that, if the decline of the Doñana aquifer (Almonte-Marismas detritic aquifer) is not reversed through rapid and effective implementation of conservation actions, including the full implementation of the recommendations of the 2020 Reactive Monitoring mission, the continued degradation could result in significant adverse impacts on the OUV of the property and have deleterious effects on its inherent characteristics, in conformity with Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines, which may create the conditions for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger;
- 14. <u>Finally requests</u> the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2026**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 48th session.

ARAB STATES

53. Socotra Archipelago (Yemen)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 2008

<u>Criteria</u> (x)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger N/A

Previous Committee Decisions see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1263/documents/

<u>International Assistance</u> Requests approved: 2 (from 2017-2023) Total amount approved: USD 131,560 For details, see page <u>https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1263/assistance/</u>

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

N/A

Previous monitoring missions

December 2012: IUCN mission; June 2014: IUCN/Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH) mission; May 2025: joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- Management systems/management plan
- Legal frameworks
- Governance
- Buildings and development
- Ground transport infrastructure: road network
- Biological resource use/modification
- Invasive/alien species or hyper-abundant species: absence of adequate biosecurity measures to avoid the introduction of invasive alien species
- Livestock farming/grazing of domesticated animals
- Fishing/collecting aquatic resources
- Solid waste: primarily in and around main settlements
- Civil unrest: unrest inhibiting management and access of international experts and capacity building support
- Climate change and severe weather events: cyclones, storms
- Impact of oil spill pollution from January 2023

Illustrative material see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1263/

Current conservation issues

On 30 January 2025, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report, an executive summary of which available at <u>https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1263/documents/</u>. It outlines the following progress:

- The Socotra branch of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues monitoring the property, working closely with local partners, but the ongoing crisis in Yemen continues to hamper sustainable financing and international development, intensifying pressure on the property's natural resources;
- In the absence of a dedicated government budget, most activities for environmental conservation are dependent on support from international partners such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNEP, Franklinia Foundation and Friends of Socotra;

- The Ministry of Water and Environment works with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on a national GEF-7 project on sustainable agriculture, livestock and fisheries management, which will benefit the property. Additional funding is being sought under GEF-8 and UNESCO is called upon to support a global safeguarding campaign;
- The State Party regrets the absence of a report to the last Committee session and commits to future reporting;
- Funding is sought for the operation of a quarantine facility at Socotra port and implementation of a comprehensive invasive alien species (IAS) strategy, with four staff contracted since 2022 for monitoring of imports and exports at the port and airport, although capacity remains limited;
- Finalisation of the Conservation Zoning Plan (CZP), progressed under the latest UNEP-GEF project, will require additional resources including for the development of a land-use plan;
- Conservation zones totalling 426 km² have already been identified, with four critical sites designated for full protection and management plans developed for four protected areas to conserve biodiversity and promote sustainable ecotourism. Firmihin, the densest area of Dragon's Blood trees, was designated as a Nature Sanctuary in 2022;
- Other activities have included rehabilitation of endangered species (tree nurseries), soil restoration, climate change and waste awareness campaigns, production of material on IAS, delivery of basic services to communities, staff capacity building, and conservation of marine turtles;
- A directive to prevent the fencing and reservation of land within national parks and environmentally sensitive areas for development has been issued;
- Traditional knowledge informs fishing regulations, is revitalised, and has played a crucial role in preserving marine biodiversity;
- The authorities plan to assess environmental impacts of existing infrastructure implemented without Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and to incorporate appropriate environmental standards into the regulatory framework;
- The dismantling of the oil tanker stranded at Delisha Nature Sanctuary since 2019 is 60% complete, with residual oil removed from the vessel. The owner/investor has been urged to remediate damage caused by the spill, and follow up actions have been identified through the Emergency Assistance project;
- An annexed table provides updates on Committee requests, including: improvements to the legislative framework, enforcement and management capacity; plans to develop a General Management Plan; continued road and tourism infrastructure development (including in sensitive areas); reduction of grazing impacts and pressure on fire wood; research programmes; pursuit of sustainable financing; biodiversity monitoring, amongst others.

The joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission invited by the State Party was conducted on 6-13 May 2025. Its findings will be reported to the 48th session of the Committee. On 1 June 2025, the State Party sent a letter to the World Heritage Centre requesting support with turtle conservation and addressing the issue of turtle poaching.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN

Recalling that no report was submitted in 2024, the State Party's commitment to ensuring its reporting to the World Heritage Committee in future is appreciated.

The ongoing political instability and economic crisis in Yemen continue to impact the government's capacity to manage the property, which is highly concerning. Noting the State Party's detailed report identifying actions needed to respond to the Committee's requests, it is recommended that the State Party adopts a list of management priorities as a guiding framework to secure a dedicated government conservation budget and to mobilise support from international partners. Despite significant challenges, the authorities' continued commitment to prioritise the conservation and protection of the property is commendable.

Progress towards finalising the CZP, as well as plans to develop a land use plan and a General Management Plan, is noted. These plans are critical for establishing a clear vision and approach for the conservation and development of the property and the archipelago at large. The CZP should therefore

be finalised as soon as possible, and all plans be consistent with the protection of the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). It is recommended that the State Party consider requesting international assistance from the World Heritage Fund to support the finalisation of the CZP and the management planning process.

The State Party has provided clarification that the designation and development of management plans for the Homhil, Firmihin, Rosh and DiHamri protected areas provides protection for sensitive biodiversity areas within the property, including to specifically protect the area with highest concentration of Dragon's Blood trees. While the new directive to prevent land reservation in national parks and environmentally sensitive areas will further strengthen the regulation of development pressures, it is important that these regulations are enforced.

It is noted with serious concern that rapid urban expansion and infrastructure development continue, including in environmentally sensitive areas, with some projects reportedly uncontrolled or in breach of regulations. It is recalled that all interventions in or around the property that may affect the property and its OUV must undergo rigorous impact assessments, as per Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines and in line with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context. Proposals and related documentation must be submitted to the World Heritage Centre under Paragraph 172 before any irreversible decisions are made, including construction. The State Party is requested to expedite the review of the existing infrastructure developments that may still require an assessment of impacts, environmental management plan, or mitigation measures, and continue to incorporate appropriate environmental standards into the regulatory framework.

It is positive that efforts to address IAS have advanced with international support. However, to ensure fully effective control and biosecurity measures and to also protect the property from the illegal export of natural resources, it is crucial that the airport and seaport facilities are adequately equipped and staffed without delay. Full implementation of the IAS strategy is essential, as is enforcing the regulations strictly for all incoming goods and exports, and ensuring that officers have the needed legal authority. This will require securing sustained funding, staff training, and strengthened cooperation between authorities, including the EPA, the coastguard, the police and the judiciary.

The ongoing GEF-FAO project provides an opportunity to address the growing pressure on land and resources in the property. It is recommended that the State Party and the executing/implementing agencies coordinate their work with the World Heritage Centre to ensure clear reporting to the Committee. The State Party's response to the stranded oil tanker is also noted, with a need to continue with the follow up actions to improve long-term contingency planning.

The property continues to face significant threats, including IAS, uncontrolled development, unsustainable resource use, climate change, pollution, and illegal activities such as turtle poaching. The report of the joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission of May 2025 is expected to provide further details on management effectiveness and the property's overall state of conservation, assess whether the property is still faced with threats which could have deleterious effects on its inherent characteristics, as defined in Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines, and would require mobilising further support from the international community through the inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, and provide recommendations on management priorities to support the State Party in effectively protecting and managing the property and its OUV.

Draft Decision: 47 COM 7B.53

- 1. <u>Having examined</u> Document WHC/25/47.COM/7B.Add.5,
- 2. <u>Recalling</u> Decisions **42** COM 7B.100, **43** COM 7B.1, **44** COM 7B.88, **45** COM 7B.12 and **46** COM 7B.61, adopted at its 42nd (Manama, 2018), 43rd (Baku, 2019), extended 44th (Fuzhou/online), extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023) and 46th (New Delhi, 2024) sessions respectively,
- 3. <u>Expresses its serious concern</u> that ongoing political instability and economic crisis in Yemen continue to limit the effective protection and management of the property, <u>calls</u>

<u>upon</u> the international community to provide increased support to the State Party to implement the priority management and conservation measures;

- 4. <u>Welcomes</u> the implementation of activities to control invasive alien species (IAS) including construction of a port quarantine facility that still needs to be equipped, airport and seaport monitoring, and preparation of an IAS strategy, and <u>requests</u> the State Party, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, to ensure strict enforcement of regulations for both imports and exports, that officers have the necessary capacity and legal authority, and to secure the necessary funding to fully implement the IAS strategy and operationalise biosecurity measures and trade controls for the property;
- 5. <u>Takes note</u> of the progress towards finalising the Conservation Zoning Plan (CZP), the plans to develop a land use plan and a General Management Plan (GMP), and the designation and development of management plans for four protected areas in the property, and <u>also requests</u> the State Party to expedite the finalisation of the CZP, informing the land use plan and GMP, and ensuring consistency with the protection of the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and to submit these documents to the World Heritage Centre for review before their adoption;
- 6. <u>Encourages</u> the State Party to consider requesting international assistance from the World Heritage Fund to support the finalisation of the CZP and associated management planning, including for the preparation of the land use plan and the GMP;
- 7. <u>While noting</u> the measures to regulate activities in the property and its buffer zone, including the establishment of a new directive to prevent land reservation in protected areas, notes with serious concern the urban expansion and infrastructure development, including in sensitive areas and in violation of regulations, <u>urges</u> the State Party and all stakeholders involved in development projects to ensure that related impact assessments are implemented in line with the Operational Guidelines and the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, before making any irreversible decisions including to begin construction, and <u>further requests</u> the State Party to:
 - a) Expedite the assessment of infrastructure developed without Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and their potential impacts, as requested by the Committee, proposing follow up measures to mitigate any adverse impacts,
 - b) Strengthen environmental standards in the regulatory framework and their enforcement, and harmonise them with the updated CZP, land use plan, GMP and other management documents;
- 8. <u>Recalling</u> that grazing, marine exploitation, and fuelwood collection continue to exert pressure on the property, <u>welcomes</u> the ongoing Global Environment Facility/Food and Agriculture Organization (GEF-FAO) project focused on agriculture, livestock, and fisheries sectors, and <u>encourages</u> the State Party and the implementing partners to report on the activities, and share research findings and key results;
- 9. <u>Notes</u> the dismantling of the oil tanker stranded at Delisha Nature Sanctuary is underway, with some additional risks eliminated through removal of residual oil from the vessel, and <u>requests furthermore</u> the State Party to continue with the remedial actions and response as identified through the Emergency Assistance project, including with long-term contingency planning, in view of the potentially severe damage caused by oil spills in the property;
- 10. <u>While acknowledging</u> the State Party's commitment to protecting the property, despite its significantly limited capacity, <u>reiterates its concern</u> about the numerous threats facing

the property, including uncontrolled development, unsustainable resource use, poaching, climate change, pollution, inadequate funding, and insufficient IAS controls, the cumulative impacts of which could represent a potential danger to the OUV of the property, and <u>also encourages</u> the State Party to develop a list of management priorities to secure a dedicated government conservation budget and to mobilise support from international partners to address these threats;

- 11. <u>Further takes note</u> that the joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property was undertaken in May 2025, to assess the current state of conservation of the property, in particular in relation to the aforementioned threats, and to determine whether the property is still faced with threats which could have deleterious effects on its inherent characteristics, as defined in Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines and meets the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, and that the mission findings will be reported to the next 48th session of the Committee;
- 12. <u>Finally requests</u> the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2026**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 48th session, considering that the urgent conservation needs of this property require a broad mobilization to preserve its OUV, including the possible inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger

MIXED PROPERTIES

EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

55. Laponian Area (Sweden)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 1996

<u>Criteria</u> (iii)(v)(vii)(viii)(ix)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger N/A

Previous Committee Decisions see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/774/documents/

<u>International Assistance</u> Requests approved: 0 Total amount approved: USD 0 For details, see page <u>https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/774/assistance/</u>

<u>UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds</u> N/A

<u>Previous monitoring missions</u> 2024 Joint World Heritage/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- Mining
- Identity, social cohesion, changes in local population and community
- Management systems/management plan

Illustrative material see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/774/

Current conservation issues

In response to the Committee's request in Decision **45 COM 7B.32**, a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission visited the property from 27 to 31 May 2024. The Mission report is available at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/774/documents/.

On 3 February 2025, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report, which is also accessible via the same link. This report was submitted before State Party's receipt of the Mission report and therefore addresses the aforementioned Decision rather than the Mission's conclusions. The report is summarised as follows:

- The Kallak K No.1 mining Exploitation Concession entered into legal effect on 25 June 2024, following the Supreme Administrative Court's dismissal of an appeal lodged by the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation and the Sámi villages of Jåhkågasska and Sirges Samebys. The appeal challenged the Swedish government's 2022 decision to approve the concession;
- In October 2024, Jokkmokk Iron Mines AB (the company granted the concession) initiated a consultation process for the Environmental Permit required for mining to proceed; the company confirmed that, in line with the conditions for a permit application, it will conduct an impact assessment in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context. The Swedish National Heritage Board has stressed the need for the process to comprehensively address the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), in dialogue with site management, and to consider direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts, as well as the recommendations of the Reactive Monitoring mission;

- No formal application for the Environmental Permit has been submitted to date; all impact assessment-related documentation will be transmitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to any decision on the permit;
- The government has mandated the Swedish Agency for Public Management to review the existing protection and management measures, with a view to ensuring the sustainable, efficient, and long-term conservation of the property;
- In January 2024, Svenska Kraftnät (the public authority responsible for electricity transmission) submitted an application to the Swedish Energy Markets Inspectorate (SEMI) to extend the national grid between Porjusberget and Naalojärvi (Vitåfors), a section located within the property. Consultations are currently underway. Due to the area's Natura 2000 designation, a permit from the Land and Environment Court is also required;
- A proposed further extension of the grid between Naalojärvi and Messaure is currently undergoing the mandatory consultation process, with a permit application anticipated in 2026; the Swedish National Heritage Board has informed SEMI that decisions regarding these grid extensions should be postponed until the Committee has examined the findings of the Reactive Monitoring Mission;
- There are currently no plans to upgrade wind turbines either within the property or in its wider setting;
- In response to concerns regarding the rights of the Sámi, the State Party reiterates that various provisions have been incorporated into the aforementioned concession conditions to minimise negative impacts, including legally mandated consultation processes.
- On 30 September 2024, the Mining Inspectorate of Sweden granted an Exploration Permit for test drilling in Allivaara, located near the property, to investigate mineral potential. Should viable deposits be confirmed, the company intends to submit an application for an Exploitation Concession, following the same procedure as for the Kallak mine; no such application has yet been submitted.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies

Some positive developments are acknowledged in the State Party's state of conservation report, including the Swedish Government's initiative to review the protection measures for the property and the Swedish National Heritage Board's efforts to align national procedures more closely with the requirements of the Convention.

The proposed Kallak mining project in the vicinity of the property, along with increasing development pressures both within and around its boundaries, continue to pose a significant threat to its OUV. Regarding the proposed mine, it is noted that the State Party has committed to submitting, prior to any decision on the approval of the Environmental Permit required for mining to proceed, the terms of reference for the impact assessment as well as the impact assessment itself, undertaken in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, to the World Heritage Centre for review.

However, it is important to highlight that the 2024 Reactive Monitoring mission concluded that the proposed mine would significantly exacerbate the existing challenges faced by the Sámi communities in maintaining their traditional reindeer transhumance practices linked to the property. Of particular concern is the information provided to the mission indicating that the impact assessment, commissioned by the mining company, would focus on defining mitigation measures rather than fundamentally evaluating whether the mine should proceed based on its potential impact on the OUV of the property.

The mission also noted that the conditions attached to the initial concession (e.g. measures to mitigate, insofar as possible, negative impacts on reindeer husbandry and to minimise any impact on the World Heritage property during mining operations) cannot be considered sufficient to counteract the substantial overall negative impacts on reindeer husbandry or to safeguard the property's OUV. Specifically, the proposed mine is located within a critical migration corridor used by reindeer herding communities to access essential winter grazing grounds. The Mission considered that the development would disrupt reindeer migration and have severe consequences for winter pastures, which are vital to the continuation of reindeer transhumance practices within the property. It also concluded that such disruption would threaten the long-term sustainability of the traditional Sámi reindeer herding system, which is a key cultural attribute underpinning the property's OUV. The integrity of the property relies on the ecological and cultural connectivity between the summer grazing lands within its boundaries and the winter grazing

lands in its wider setting. This connectivity is maintained through key migration corridors, such as the Jåhkågasska Tjiellde corridor, where the proposed mine would be located. The mine could have an impact on the landscape both within and around the property and may represent a tipping point for the sustainability of Sámi communities.

Given the potentially irreversible consequences of the proposed mine on the property's OUV, it is therefore recommended, in line with the conclusions of the Mission, that the Committee urge the State Party not to grant the Environmental Permit required for mining operations to proceed.

The planned expansion of various projects, including power grids, other industrial developments, and forestry, risks further disruption to reindeer husbandry practices. The recent approval of test drilling in Allivaara, bordering the property, also raises serious concerns about potential future mining activities that could further threaten the property's OUV. Noting the various pressures in the vicinity of the property, it is recommended that the State Party establish, through a minor boundary modification, a buffer zone to support the integrity of recognised migration routes, as a critical measure for sustaining the wider Sámi reindeer transhumance husbandry system.

Furthermore, a more strategic and integrated conservation approach is urgently required. In line with the Mission's findings, it is recommended that the Committee encourage the development, in full consultation with the concerned Sámi communities, of a comprehensive Sustainable Development Strategy to address growing pressures on the property. This Strategy should be aligned with the 2015 *Policy on the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the World Heritage Convention*, guide the revision of the management plan, and ensure the long-term sustainability of Sámi reindeer transhumance while supporting the property's OUV.

It is important that the potential impacts of the various proposed projects are considered both individually and cumulatively in relation to their impact on the property's OUV, including the continuity of reindeer transhumance. In line with the Mission's findings, it is further proposed that the Committee request the State Party to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment for the property, in order to assess the cumulative impact of all major development projects on the property and its immediate and wider setting. The potential impacts of individual projects should be assessed in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, and based on the attributes underpinning the property's OUV.

The lack of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) from the Sámi Indigenous Peoples in major projects, as previously highlighted by the Committee in Decisions **45 COM 7B.32** and **46 COM 7B.45**, remains a significant concern. The Committee may therefore wish to reiterate its request to the State Party to ensure that any further consideration of major projects fully guarantees the FPIC of the Sámi, in accordance with international norms and standards.

Governance structures for the property reflect a separation between its natural and cultural values as recognised in the Statement of OUV, resulting in inadequate representation of cultural heritage within management and decision-making processes. The existing management plan neither clearly defines how existing legislation collectively protects the property's OUV, nor does it integrate conservation measures within broader regional and national frameworks. The World Heritage Committee may therefore wish to recommend that the State Party address these gaps during the upcoming revision of the management plan by adopting a holistic approach that prioritises the property's OUV, establishes guidelines for resolving conflicts between competing national interests, such as mining, reindeer husbandry, and environmental protection, within the overarching context of protecting OUV, alongside measures to enhance the property's interpretation. The State Party may be requested to submit the revised management plan to the World Heritage Committee prior to its adoption. Strengthening the involvement of cultural heritage institutions and Sámi organisations within governance structures remains essential to reflect the property's mixed natural and cultural heritage status.

Draft Decision: 47 COM 7B.55

The World Heritage Committee,

1. <u>Having examined</u> Document WHC/25/47.COM/7B.Add.5,

- 2. <u>Recalling</u> Decision CONF 201 VIII.B, adopted at its 20th session (Merida, 1996), by which the Committee recommended that the Swedish authorities continue to work with local Sámi people, Decision 37 COM 7 (Part III) adopted at its 37th session (Phnom Penh, 2013), which urged all States Parties and leading industry stakeholders to respect the International Council on Mining and Metals "No-go" commitment by not permitting extractive activities within World Heritage properties and by making every effort to ensure that extractive companies located in their territory cause no damage to World Heritage properties, in accordance with Article 6 of the Convention, and Decisions 45 COM 7B.32 and 46 COM 7B.45, adopted at its extended 45th session (Riyadh, 2023) and 46th session (New Delhi, 2024) respectively,
- 3. <u>Takes note</u> of the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission, and <u>expresses its sincere appreciation</u> to the Swedish authorities for their financial support of the Mission;
- 4. <u>Notes with significant concern</u> that the Mission considered that the proposed Kallak mining project, which would be located near the property within a critical reindeer migration corridor, poses a significant threat to the cultural and natural values of the property, in particular in relation to the Sámi reindeer transhumance system, which is a key attribute of the OUV of the property, <u>considers</u> that mitigation measures would be insufficient to counteract the substantial overall negative impacts on the property's OUV, and thus <u>urges</u> the State Party not to grant an Environmental Permit for the project, as its approval would cause irreversible damage to the property's OUV;
- 5. <u>Notes with concern</u> the information provided to the Mission indicating that the impact assessment for the proposed mining project, commissioned by the mining company, would focus on defining mitigation measures, and <u>takes note</u> of the State Party's subsequent commitment to submit an impact assessment prepared in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, to the World Heritage Centre for review, prior to any decision on the approval of the Environmental Permit required for mining to proceed;
- 6. <u>Also notes</u> the mission's findings that protection of migration corridors and winter grazing areas in the immediate setting of the property boundaries is inadequate, and <u>strongly encourages</u> the State Party to submit a minor boundary modification to establish a buffer zone explicitly linked to the property's OUV, in accordance with Paragraph 164 of the Operational Guidelines;
- 7. <u>Notes furthermore</u> that, to ensure the long-term sustainability of Sámi reindeer transhumance, a more strategic and integrated conservation approach is urgently required; and <u>encourages</u> the State Party to develop a Sustainable Development Strategy for the property and its setting, in full consultation with the concerned Sámi Indigenous Peoples, to better align heritage conservation and management with sustainable development goals while safeguarding the property's OUV and recognising the interrelationship between culture and nature as fundamental to community well-being; and to submit a draft Strategy to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;
- 8. <u>Expresses concern</u> over the numerous past and new development projects within the setting of the property, including the granting of an Exploration Concession by the Mining Inspectorate of Sweden for test drilling in Allivaara, and <u>moreover requests</u> the State Party to:
 - a) undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment for the property to assess the cumulative impact of all major development projects on the OUV of the property;

- b) ensure all planned developments are assessed for their potential impacts on the property's OUV through a Heritage/Environmental Impact Assessment, based on a detailed delineation of the attributes underpinning the property's OUV;
- *c)* submit these assessments to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to any decisions being taken;
- 9. <u>Reiterates its request</u> to the State Party to ensure that any further consideration of mining permits guarantees the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of the Sámi Indigenous Peoples, and to integrate FPIC procedures into decision-making processes concerning all future major infrastructure and industrial projects, in accordance with international standards, including the Convention;
- 10. <u>Further welcomes</u> the Swedish Government's initiative to commission the Swedish Agency for Public Management to review existing protection and management measures to ensure the sustainable and long-term conservation of the property, and <u>calls upon</u> the State Party to continue clarifying legal protection measures and governance responsibilities for safeguarding the property's OUV, and to ensure its alignment with national legislation, as well as international obligations under the Convention and human rights standards;
- 11. <u>Also requests</u> the State Party to update and revise the management plan in accordance with the Mission's recommendations to address identified gaps, and <u>further requests</u> the State Party that the draft management plan be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to its adoption,
- 12. <u>Further requests</u> the State Party to address all other recommendations of the Mission;
- 13. <u>Finally requests</u> the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2026**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 48th session.

AFRICA

60. Ngorongoro Conservation Area (United Republic of Tanzania)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 1979

<u>Criteria</u> (iv)(vii)(viii)(ix)(x)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger 1984-1989

Previous Committee Decisions see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/39/documents/

International Assistance Requests approved: 16 (from 1979-2014) Total amount approved: USD 290,386 For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/39/assistance/

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

Total amount provided to the property: USD 50,000 from Switzerland, USD 35,000 from the Netherlands, USD 20,000 from the United Nations Development Assistance Plan (UNDAP) and USD 8,000 selfbenefitting funds from the United Republic of Tanzania for community consultative process in 2013-2014; USD 50,000 from the Flanders Funds-in-Trust for sustainable tourism strategy in 2014-2015

Previous monitoring missions

April 1986: IUCN mission; April-May 2007 and December 2008: World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring missions; February 2011: World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission; April 2012: World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission; August 2017: ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission; March 2019: Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission; February 2024: Joint UNESCO/ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- Geothermal energy development project (issue resolved)
 - Buildings and Development (potential impact of a lodge development project on the crater rim, proposed museum building at Laetoli)
 - Transportation infrastructure (impact of the project for upgrading Lodoare Gate to Golini Main Road, construction of the southern bypass road and access road to Olduvai museum)
 - Biological resource use/modification (poaching, grazing pressure)
 - Social/cultural uses of heritage (relevance of Maasai traditional knowledge to the management of the area, increased human population, tourism pressure, challenges facing community livelihoods)
 - Invasive/alien species (spread of invasive species)
 - Management System/Management Plan (including governance of the property and community involvement/collaboration, condition and conservation of the Laetoli hominid footprints)

Illustrative material see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/39/

Current conservation issues

On 13 February 2025, the State Party submitted a report on the state of conservation of the property, available at <u>https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/39/documents</u>, which reports the following:

 The State Party reiterates its stance that maintaining the Multiple Land Use Model (MLUM) management system has more negative impacts to the property's values due to increased human population and livestock, transformation in land use patterns, and climate change. It is stated that this is further supported by independent research and various concerns regarding degradation of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). It is stated that the comparative advantages of the MLUM indicated in the MLUM review report are subject to key conditions for maintaining the model with some adjustments, including a voluntary human rights-based resettlement of local communities;

- The State Party reports that it has been involving stakeholders and rightsholders in all levels of the MLUM implementation, including development of the General Management Plan (GMP), review of the MLUM, and the strategy moving forward. The results of this include the voluntary relocation of local communities from the property to Msomera Village and other areas;
- The State Party considers that all relevant stakeholders were invited to meet and share concerns shared with the 2024 Advisory mission, which had sufficient time to listen to different views and time to visit and speak with representatives of the local communities in the property and those voluntarily relocated to Msomera village;
- The State Party takes note of the World Heritage Committee position that further in-person and on-site engagement is required to ensure that the views and concerns of all local communities and stakeholders on the review of the MLUM and the voluntary resettlement scheme are adequately heard;
- A summary of the implementation of the 2017 and 2019 mission recommendations, including regarding the upgrade of the Lodoare Gate to Golini main road through the property is appended. The results of the archaeological investigations and baseline ecological and environmental data related to the road and the feasibility of the Southern bypass road as noted as having been submitted in its previous reports on the state of conservation of the property;
- The GMP is being developed and will take into consideration all issues related to tourism, cultural heritage conservation and other concerns raised by the Committee in previous decisions;
- Wildlife monitoring is reinforced through implementation of advanced technology (PAM-DAS (Earth ranger security system) and community awareness campaigns. Monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with impact assessment studies will be developed and transmitted to the World Heritage Centre for review once the financial status improves;
- The importance of conducting a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is recognised. Resources are being mobilised and its findings will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre when available;
- A tourism interpretation strategy is being developed and resources organised to develop integrated guidelines on the tourism carrying capacity and monitoring framework for the property;
- Plans for translocation of southern white rhino continue and updates on any progress will be provided immediately;
- Updating of the Laetoli Footprints Conservation and Sustainable Use Roadmap continues, a landscape survey has been initiated, which will inform conservation, protection and conservation of the footprints. An experimental enclosure has been constructed at site G to trial indoor conservation techniques;
- The request for a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission is welcomed.

On 25 June 2025, the World Heritage Centre transmitted a UNESCO report of the preliminary observations of the 2024 Advisory mission to the State Party.

In December 2024, the Ngorongoro Lengai UNESCO Global Geopark, which overlaps the property, was subject to a successful revalidation process.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies

The involvement of all stakeholders and rightsholders in all levels of the implementation of the MLUM, including its 2020 review, remains essential as the foundation for the conservation of the property, and for a full and consistent implementation of an inclusive management approach. It is important to reiterate that a MLUM approach (that involves natural, cultural, social and economic parameters) has been in place since the inscription of the property on the World Heritage List, and that any decision to abandon such an approach would mark a highly concerning change in the management of the property.

Whilst the State Party report takes the position that a MLUM approach has more negative impacts on the property from pressures, such as increased human population and livestock, it is important to reiterate that the MLUM Review considered that maintaining a MLUM with some adjustments has "more advantages economically, socially, culturally, politically and internally than the one that advocates for changing NCA to other protected area category". It is therefore important that the State Party continue taking a multiple dimensional approach to land management, and that any relocation of local communities from the property to new areas is implemented on a voluntary basis. This is essential, as it is clear that there are residents who are opposed to relocation, and thus there should be no pressure on them to leave. Thus, it remains the view of the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies that the management of the property, developed in consultation with stakeholders and rightsholders, should ensure a continued multiple land use approach with a clear human rights-based approach.

In this regard, the position of the World Heritage Committee at its 46th session provides a sound basis for the further consideration of the management approach to the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, both in terms of its recognition on the World Heritage List, and ensuring the positive relationship to the other UNESCO designations under which the property is recognised (e.g., Global Geopark), which also emphasise the centrality of local communities to the property.

It is also recalled that various concerns were expressed by local, national and international organisations regarding the relocation process and adequate consultation of communities in relation to the 2024 Advisory mission, which indicated that further in-person engagement on site is required to ensure that the views and concerns of communities are adequately heard in order to inform an accurate analysis of the situation at the property, including in relation to the State Party's proposed approach to the voluntary relocation.

It is recommended that the requested Reactive Monitoring mission be undertaken as soon as possible to enable further dialogue to better assess the management changes being contemplated. This will enable the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, in dialogue with the State Party and with inclusion and consultation necessary with local communities, to make recommendations to the Committee on the steps to be taken to address the significant concerns noted above, and to formulate appropriate recommendations. It is positive that the State Party welcomes this proposal, and thus the organisation of this mission should proceed at the earliest opportunity.

The update of implementation against 2017 and 2019 mission recommendations is appreciated, as well as other related requests. Regarding the upgrade of the Lodoare Gate-Golini road, it is noted that a phased approach to the implementation of the upgrade to enable adjustments is reported to have been followed, as recommended in the 2024 joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to Serengeti National Park World Heritage property. Whilst report of the feasibility study for the southern by-pass route was submitted, the action plan to regulate traffic will be submitted and included in the upgrade contract, the submission of the baseline archaeological and environmental studies remains pending at the time of completion of the present report. It is noted that the GMP, the SEA, and the tourism interpretation strategy and integrated guidelines on the tourism carrying capacity and monitoring framework for the property remain under development. Highlighting the importance of these various planning and management processes to the State Party's management efforts for the property, it is recommended that the State Party be requested to provide an update on poaching and the management of invasive alien species in the property in its next report.

Noting that plans for the translocation of southern white rhino into the property continue and progress will be reported, it is recommended to reiterate the request not to proceed with the introduction without addressing the concerns raised by the IUCN Species Survival Commission African Rhino Specialist Group (AfrRSG).

The Committee, in Decision **46 COM 7B.48**, requested the State Party not yet to implement the 2024 *Laetoli Conservation and Sustainable Use Roadmap*, but to continue to further define clearer conservation approaches for the Laetoli footprint site and for the overall archaeological landscape. The State Party reports that it has commenced with a landscape study to further inform future plans for the Laetoli footprints, which is welcome. It would be of value for the outcomes of this study to be shared with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies. The State Party has also commenced with the construction of an experimental enclosure to conduct climate test at the Laetoli Footprints site G. These experiments seem to be based in part on expert opinion reported to in the *Roadmap*, that the footprints at site G have lost their significant scientific value due to changes of the shape and other anthropogenic imperfections on their surface. The urgent submission of further information on these experiments and

the current status of the Laetoli footprints would allow the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to assist the State Party in developing an appropriate way forward for the conservation, presentation and interpretation of these attributes.

Draft Decision: 47 COM 7B.60

- 1. <u>Having examined</u> Document WHC/25/47.COM/7B.Add.4,
- 2. <u>Recalling</u> Decisions **44 COM 7B.171**, **45 COM 7B.30** and **46 COM 7B.48**, adopted at its extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021), extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023), and 46th (New Delhi, 2024) sessions respectively;
- 3. <u>Considers</u> that the involvement of stakeholders and rightsholders remains essential in all aspects of the implementation of the Multiple Land Use Model (MLUM), including its review, challenges to be addressed, and subsequent implementation strategy;
- 4. <u>Also recalling</u> that the 2020 Review of the MLUM management system states that maintaining a MLUM has "more advantages economically, socially, culturally, politically and internally than the one that advocates for changing NCA to other protected area category" [NCA: Ngorongoro Conservation Area];
- 5. <u>Reiterates its view</u> that the continued implementation of a MLUM, developed in consultation with all stakeholders and rightsholders, and which ensures a clear human rights based approach, is appropriate in principle, and <u>further considers</u> that it is essential that there is full engagement, including effective and adequate consultation with all relevant stakeholders and rightsholders, including those who oppose relocation, in relation to the development of the General Management Plan (GMP) and the implementation strategy going forward following the review of the MLUM;
- 6. <u>Recalls</u> that further in-person and on-site engagement with the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies is required to ensure that the views and concerns of all local communities and stakeholders on the outcome of the MLUM review and the voluntary resettlement scheme are adequately heard;
- 7. <u>Welcomes</u> the State Party's positive response to the request of the Committee for a new joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property, and <u>requests</u> the State Party to invite the mission to the property at the earliest opportunity, as per the present and previous Committee decisions;
- 8. <u>Reiterates its request</u> to the State Party to fully implement the 2017 mission recommendations concerning the Lodoare Gate to Golini main road through the property and to submit to the World Heritage Centre, for review by the Advisory Bodies, the action plan to manage road use, and the results of archaeological investigations and baseline ecological and environmental data before starting the upgrading works;
- 9. <u>Notes</u> that the GMP for the property remains in development, and <u>also requests</u> the State Party to finalise the GMP as soon as possible in line with previous decisions;
- 10. <u>Also notes</u> that the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) remains underway, and <u>also reiterates its request</u> to the State Party to ensure the timely delivery of the SEA in order to evaluate the current and future impacts of developments across all sectors in

the region, including the property and the wider Serengeti ecosystem so that the findings can inform management, and submit the SEA to the World Heritage Centre for review;

- 11. <u>Also takes note</u> of the update on the implementation of the 2017 Advisory and 2019 Reactive Monitoring mission recommendations and previous Committee decisions, and <u>further requests</u> the State Party to provide a full update on the action plan for the implementation of mission recommendations, to provide an update on activities related to poaching and managing invasive alien species, and to ensure that all pending matters be addressed;
- 12. <u>Requests furthermore</u> that the State Party complete the various tourism related measures including development of a tourism interpretation strategy and integrated guidelines on the tourism carrying capacity and monitoring framework for the property;
- 13. <u>Further reiterates its request</u> to implement the recommendation of the 2024 joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to Serengeti National Park World Heritage property on the southern bypass road to downgrade the status of the Karatu – Nyamusa road as a trunk road to a protected area road, closing it for heavy transit traffic from Arusha to Musoma and by disincentivizing other vehicle transit traffic, and to fully implement the 2017 Advisory mission recommendations concerning the upgrading of the Lodoare Gate to Golini main road through the property;
- 14. <u>Noting</u> that plans for the translocation of southern white rhino into the property continue and that progress will be reported, and <u>reiterates its request furthermore</u> not to proceed with the introduction without addressing the concerns raised by the IUCN Species Survival Commission African Rhino Specialist Group (AfrRSG);
- 15. <u>Also welcomes</u> the initiation of a landscape study at Laetoli which will investigate ecological, archaeological and historic features, and <u>invites</u> the State Party to share its outcomes with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies;
- 16. <u>Expresses its concern</u> that a temporary enclosure and climate control trials have commenced at the Laetoli footprint site G, and <u>requests furthermore</u> that the State Party:
 - a) Submit, as soon as possible further details and an update on outcomes of the experimental project at site G to the World Heritage Centre,
 - b) Engage the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies in the evaluation of further conservation actions before any decisions are made on the conservation, and presentation of the footprints at the site;
- 17. <u>Finally requests</u> the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2026**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 48th session.

CULTURAL PROPERTIES

EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

98. Cultural Landscape of Khinalig People and "Köç Yolu" Transhumance Route (Azerbaijan)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 2023

<u>Criteria</u> (iii)(v)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger N/A

Previous Committee Decisions see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1696/documents/

International Assistance Requests approved: 0 Total amount approved: USD 0 For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1696/assistance/

<u>UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds</u> N/A

<u>Previous monitoring missions</u> N/A

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

Factors identified at the time of inscription of the property:

- Level of protection afforded to key attributes underpinning the property's Outstanding Universal Value (*issue resolved*)
- Effectiveness of the management system
- Insufficient consideration of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property in the design and construction of new developments and infrastructure projects within the property and its buffer zone
- Visitor management
- Progress in completing the Conservation Master Plan and the robustness of monitoring systems

Illustrative material see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1696/

Current conservation issues

The State Party submitted a state of conservation report on 29 November 2024, available at <u>https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1696/documents/</u>. The report provides information on actions implemented in response to the Committee's Decision **45 COM 8B.42** at the time of inscription, summarised below, and includes the updated Management Plan as well as the completed Conservation Master Plan:

• The Khinalig and Köç Yolu State Historical, Cultural and Ethnographic Reserve was established by presidential decree on 4 September 2023. This unified protected reserve places the property and its buffer zone under the full jurisdiction of the State Tourism Agency. The decree also mandates the development and approval of a special management regime designed to provide an integrated approach to heritage conservation, thereby enhancing administrative oversight and facilitating improved management strategies for the property. The Reserve's administration has been established and staffed with 102 personnel, with resources duly allocated. The new management structure has been incorporated in the Management Plan. Boundaries for the Reserve have been delineated with final confirmation anticipated in early 2025;

- The updated Management Plan outlines the proposed governance arrangements for the property, a tourism development plan, management objectives and actions, as well as monitoring mechanisms. The established objectives aim to address current conditions and ensure the conservation of the attributes underpinning the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);
- The Conservation Master Plan (CMP) provides guidance for the conservation of attributes that underpin not only the property's OUV but also its values of national and local significance. It includes an inventory of heritage assets, accompanied by an analysis of their conservation condition and recommendations to address identified issues. The CMP also sets out measures to maintain the property's authenticity and integrity. It also establishes guidelines for new infrastructure projects, ensuring compatibility with the property's OUV;
- Legislative amendments are currently underway to align the 2022 Restoration Manual with international conservation standards. This process involves collaboration with national institutions and expert stakeholders to refine and update the manual, addressing ongoing challenges in restoration efforts and ensuring the long-term preservation of cultural heritage. The legislative reform is expected to continue through 2025 with Government support;
- The collection of cadastral data and mapping of the property's boundaries is in progress. This initiative will provide accurate and up-to-date records of the property's geographical extent, supporting more effective management and safeguarding of its OUV. The project is anticipated to be completed in 2025, thereby strengthening the Reserve's management framework;
- Restoration work on Khinalig houses has continued, with 41 high-risk houses restored since 2020. These efforts have also delivered positive socio-economic benefits for local communities, including job creation and increased tourism revenue;
- Archaeological excavations near Khinalig have yielded significant research outcomes, including chronological data on burial monuments and insights into the area's inhabitation, burial practices, and political history.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM

The establishment of the protected Reserve represents a significant step towards ensuring the adequate conservation and management of the property and its buffer zone. The integrated designation guarantees continuous protection and management, directly responding to the Committee's recommendation to afford the highest level of protection to all key attributes underpinning the property's OUV. The decree's mandate to establish a special management regime is particularly noteworthy, as it promotes an integrated approach to heritage conservation, strengthens administrative oversight, and facilitates the implementation of enhanced management strategies. The substantial staffing of 102 personnel, alongside allocated resources, reflects a strong commitment from the State Party to the Reserve's management. The delineation of boundaries and the incorporation of the new management structure into the Management Plan constitute positive steps towards effective governance.

The updated Management Plan provides a comprehensive framework and a well-structured approach to guide conservation efforts. Complementing this, the CMP serves as a critical tool, providing detailed guidance on conserving attributes that underpin not only the property's OUV, but also its values of national and local significance. An ICOMOS Technical Review with a more detailed analysis of the CMP and recommendations will be made available to the State Party.

The inventory of heritage assets, the assessment of conservation conditions, and the accompanying preservation recommendations, together with ongoing legislative amendments, are essential measures to maintain the property's authenticity and integrity. The introduction of a monitoring system aligned with the Management Plan further supports the systematic tracking of the property's state of conservation.

Restoration efforts, including the refurbishment of 41 high-risk houses since 2020, along with initiatives to enhance tourism infrastructure, have delivered tangible benefits to local communities by generating employment and increasing tourism-related income.

However, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies acknowledge potential challenges in implementing these plans, notably the need for effective coordination among diverse stakeholders, securing and sustaining adequate funding, ensuring the availability of technical expertise, engaging local communities meaningfully, and addressing environmental considerations. The Committee may therefore wish to encourage the State Party to persist in its efforts across these areas and to remain vigilant in monitoring and adapting the plans as necessary.

The ongoing process of cadastral data collection and boundary mapping is essential for maintaining accurate and up-to-date records of the property's geographical extent. Expected to conclude in 2025, this initiative will further reinforce the Reserve's management framework. The identification and documentation of heritage elements for inclusion in the State Inventory List also represent positive steps towards comprehensive documentation and safeguarding of the property's OUV.

Overall, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies consider that the measures already undertaken, alongside ongoing efforts by the State Party, are expected to significantly enhance the protection and management of the inscribed property.

Draft Decision: 47 COM 7B.98

- 1. <u>Having examined</u> Document WHC/25/47.COM/7B.Add.5,
- 2. <u>Recalling</u> Decision 45 COM 8B.42, adopted at its extended 45th session (Riyadh, 2023),
- 3. <u>Commends</u> the State Party for the progress achieved in implementing the recommendations made at the time of inscription, notably the establishment in September 2023 of the Khinalig and Köç Yolu State Historical, Cultural and Ethnographic Reserve, aimed at ensuring the highest level of protection to the key attributes underpinning the Outstanding Universal Value of the property and supporting its integrated management and conservation;
- 4. <u>Welcomes</u> the updated Management Plan and the finalisation of the Conservation Master Plan, and <u>encourages</u> the State Party to sustain adequate long-term funding and resources, as well as to promote the meaningful engagement of local communities in their implementation;
- 5. <u>Notes</u> the ongoing efforts, including legislative amendments currently underway in collaboration with national institutions, to align the 2022 Restoration Manual with international conservation standards, and <u>urges</u> the State Party to finalise these processes to ensure that the authenticity and integrity of the property are maintained;
- 6. <u>Requests</u> the State Party to complete the cadastral data collection and mapping process, and to ensure the integration of all relevant heritage elements into the State Inventory List to support effective management and adequate protection;
- 7. <u>Also requests</u> the State Party to provide updated information on the progress made towards the restoration of the building stock and on the implementation of the Management Plan and the Conservation Master Plan, including actions undertaken to enhance community engagement;
- 8. <u>Finally requests</u> the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2027**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 50th session.

128. Arslantepe Mound (Türkiye)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 2021

<u>Criteria</u> (iii)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger N/A

Previous Committee Decisions see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1622/documents/

International Assistance Requests approved: 0 Total amount approved: USD 0 For details, see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1622/assistance/

<u>UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds</u> N/A

<u>Previous monitoring missions</u> N/A

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- Management: preparation of a conservation strategy and plan, revision of the management plan, strengthening of local management capacity, monitoring and risk and disaster management and visitor management processes, clarification of extent of archaeological features and buffer zone delineation
- Reconsidering the design of the proposed new permanent roof shelter (resolved)
- Protecting areas undergoing excavation which remain unsheltered

Illustrative material see page https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1622/

Current conservation issues

On 30 January 2025, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report, a summary of which is available at <u>https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1622/documents/</u>. The report outlines the following:

- Throughout 2024, work continued to address the impacts of the February 2023 earthquakes. Activities included rubble clearance, repairs to the temporary protective roof shelter, installation of protective mesh in archaeological profiles to prevent collapse, emergency archaeological excavation, consolidation and conservation of the damaged Iron Age fortification wall, and the installation of sensors for geoarchaeological monitoring of environmental parameters. A system of counterweights was partially installed and was expected to be completed in spring 2025;
- Surveys conducted within the buffer zone, registered as a 3rd Degree archaeological site, have yielded significant surface finds. The results of the geomagnetic survey were included in the report. New features were identified, including a fortification wall, on the northern slope of the mound;
- Although the revised Management Plan has been approved, its implementation is pending the completion of infrastructure improvements. These include construction of the new Visitor Centre, installation of the additional permanent protective roof shelter, and the establishment of safe and accessible pathways for visitors;
- The Conservation Plan and Strategy and the Risk Preparedness Plan are currently in preparation, although no timeline has been provided for their finalisation. It is expected that both will be integrated into the revised Management Plan, along with a Visitor Management Plan. In the interim, conservation and risk management measures have been carried out, including the protection of excavation profiles, maintenance of drainage systems, continued excavation in vulnerable areas, restoration and consolidation of monumental zones, and environmental monitoring;

- A response was provided to the 2024 ICOMOS Technical Review of the new permanent protective roof shelter. Construction began in August 2024. Measures to mitigate potential impacts and address the fragility of the property were discussed with the contractors. Currently, only areas undergoing excavation remain unsheltered. Further studies are planned to assess the maintenance and repair needs of the existing permanent roof shelter, which shows signs of deterioration;
- The new Visitor Centre has been largely completed, taking into account the findings of a cultural heritage impact assessment. The facility covers an area of 1,131 square metres and includes a cafeteria, administrative spaces, a cinevision hall, multipurpose hall, foyer, ticket office, souvenir shop, WCs, technical spaces, and a terrace. No further information has been provided regarding possible future developments.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM

The World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies note with appreciation the actions undertaken by the State Party in response to the Committee's Decisions, particularly those aimed at addressing the impacts of the 2023 earthquake and the construction of the additional permanent protective roof shelter. Notwithstanding the significance of these measures, it remains of concern that only limited progress has been achieved in addressing longstanding issues identified since the time of inscription.

It is regrettable that the revision of the Management Plan, which expired in January 2024, has been acknowledged but not prioritised for timely initiation. Furthermore, the connection between this revision and the completion of infrastructure improvements is unclear. The Committee may therefore wish to reiterate its request to the State Party to commence the revision process as a matter of urgency, with a view to updating the expired Management Plan to incorporate clearly defined local management roles and responsibilities, decision-making processes, as well as a Conservation Plan and Strategy, a Risk Preparedness Plan, and a Visitor Management Plan.

It is noted that, to date, neither a clear Conservation Plan and Strategy nor a Risk Preparedness Plan has been finalised to provide adequate guidance on protocols, priorities and procedures for conservation, excavation, and maintenance interventions, as underscored by the Committee at the time of inscription. The absence of these essential planning tools, along with the lack of a clearly defined scope and strategy for anticipated excavation and research areas, hampers the identification of the financial and technical resources required to adequately and systematically address conservation challenges, thereby posing a risk to the sustained safeguarding of the property's Outstanding Universal Value.

It should also be reiterated that, within the framework of the Conservation Plan and Strategy, the Committee requested the development of a clear archaeological plan at the time of inscription. Such a plan should delineate areas identified for potential excavation and define the conservation approach, in view of the potential risks posed by the removal of archaeological layers, which could compromise the integrity of the property. As previously emphasised, the excavation strategy must be revised to adopt a cautious and primarily non-invasive methodology, ensuring the preservation of the site's complex, multi-layered historical record.

Similarly, while the new visitor facilities have been constructed, no information has been provided regarding how this new infrastructure integrates with the Malatya Museum, how it will accommodate a growing number of visitors, or the information about the property that will be provided. As previously requested by the Committee, it is essential that a comprehensive Visitor Management Plan be developed to ensure that visitor demand is appropriately balanced with the conservation requirements of the property. The plan should also identify any potential future developments and clearly indicate their location in relation to areas of archaeological significance.

The recent archaeological surveys, which have identified significant surface materials and new features, are welcomed. As recommended at the time of inscription, the outcomes of these surveys should be carefully reviewed to assess whether the current boundaries of the property remain appropriate in light of the new findings, particularly the fortification wall, or whether an extension is required to ensure the adequate protection of these features.

The World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies consider that, in the absence of adequate research, conservation, risk preparedness, and management plans, there is a risk that interventions will continue to be carried out in a reactive, rather than proactive, planned and sustained manner. Concerns raised at the time of inscription remain unaddressed. The Committee may therefore wish to strongly reiterate

its requests for the State Party to implement the necessary actions to ensure the effective protection and management of the property.

Draft Decision: 47 COM 7B.128

- 1. <u>Having examined</u> Document WHC/25/47.COM/7B.Add.5,
- 2. <u>Recalling</u> Decisions **44** COM **8B.22**, **45** COM **7B.202** and **46** COM **7B.14** adopted at its extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021), extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023) and 46th (New Delhi, 2024) sessions respectively,
- 3. <u>Takes note</u> of the actions undertaken by the State Party in response to previous Committee decisions, particularly with regard to the response to the 2023 earthquake, the construction of the additional permanent protective roof shelter, and the establishment of new visitor facilities;
- 4. <u>Notes</u> that, despite these efforts, limited progress has been achieved on several key issues raised since the time of inscription, and <u>regrets</u> that the comprehensive Conservation Plan and Strategy, and the Risk Preparedness Plan have not yet been finalised, despite their importance for guiding conservation, excavation, and maintenance interventions, as previously requested by the Committee;
- 5. <u>Further notes</u> that the five-year term of the property's Management Plan expired in early 2024, and <u>requests</u> the State Party to initiate the revision process as a matter of priority, with a view to enhancing the plan to include clearly defined local management roles and responsibilities, decision-making processes, and the integration of a Conservation Strategy Plan, Risk Preparedness Plan and Visitor Management Plan;
- 6. <u>Also requests</u> the State Party to:
 - a) Finalise and implement the Conservation Plan and Strategy and Risk Preparedness Plan to ensure the sustained conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property,
 - b) Develop a detailed archaeological plan that prioritises conservation, identifies areas for potential excavation, and adopts a predominantly non-invasive approach to safeguard the site's integrity,
 - c) Develop a comprehensive Visitor Management Plan (to be integrated into the Management Plan) that ensures an appropriate balance between increased visitation and conservation requirements, clarifies the relationship between visitor facilities including the new Visitor Centre and the Malatya Museum, and outlines any anticipated future developments,
 - d) Assess the findings of recent archaeological surveys to determine whether the current boundaries of the property remain appropriate, or whether adjustments are required to ensure the protection of newly identified features;
- 7. <u>Strongly encourages</u> the State Party to adopt a more strategic approach to conservation and management, to ensure that all outstanding concerns are adequately addressed in a planned and sustained manner;

- 8. <u>Further requests</u> the State Party to provide information on any project within or around the World Heritage property that may have a potential impact on its OUV, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;
- 9. <u>Finally requests</u> the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2026**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 49th session.