

# AMENDMENT/PROPOSAL

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| <b>Agenda Item</b>                     | <b>1747</b>              |
| <b>Draft Decision</b>                  | <b>47 COM 8B.8</b>       |
| <b>Submitted by the Delegation of:</b> | <b>LEBANON</b>           |
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| <b>Date of submission</b>              | <b>7/7/2025</b>          |

## TEXT

### Draft Decision 47 COM 8B.8:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents WHC/25/47.COM/8B and WHC/25/47.COM/INF.8B2,

~~2. Refers the nomination of **Cavernas do Peruaçu National Park, Brazil**, back to the State Party, noting the strong potential for this nominated property to meet criteria (vii) and (viii), in order to allow the State Party, with the advice of IUCN and the World Heritage Centre if requested, to provide a description that is consistent with the map of the boundaries of the nominated property and to either (a) provide confirmation of the agreement of the Xakriabá people, and the position regarding free, prior and informed consent, regarding the reduced nominated area and buffer zone, or (b) to obtain consent of the Xakriabá people on the originally proposed boundaries, and retain the nomination on those original boundaries;~~

2. Inscribes the Peruaçu River Canyon, Brazil, on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria (vii) and (viii)

3. Adopts the following Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

#### Brief synthesis

The Peruaçu River Canyon, located in the northern part of Minas Gerais state, southeastern Brazil, covers an area of 38,003 hectares. Situated in the semi-arid tropics, the property encompasses a spectacular karst landscape entirely contained within the Cavernas do Peruaçu National Park.

Stretching over 21 kilometers with a vertical variation exceeding 200 meters, the canyon reveals exceptional evidence of fluvial karstification, with six major collapse points exposing sections of an underground river that shaped large cave passages — some reaching 100 meters in height and 60 meters in width. Janelão Cave, one of the most prominent features of the site, contains approximately 3 kilometers of river passages, more than half of which are illuminated by vast skylights that sustain forest ecosystems within the subterranean landscape. The property is equally remarkable for its exceptional natural beauty, exemplified by the dramatic interplay of light and vegetation within its vast cave systems and the contrast between the semi-arid surface and lush interior chambers.

The Peruacu river basin has the most outstanding example of karstification of a river system, so far recognised and reported.

The property stands out with its extraordinary contrast between thin low seasonally dry xerophytic forest on the surface and hidden-world sunken islands of lush forest ecosystems ringed by precipitous cliffs below the surface.

Although the property was not inscribed under biodiversity or cultural criteria, it is located in a transitional region between two of Brazil's most important biomes with fragments of a third: the Cerrado, the Caatinga, and fragments of the Atlantic Forest. This characteristic of the park provides a mosaic of landscapes and habitats, reflecting in the diversity and richness of its vegetation cover. There are 950 identified species of fauna and 1,072 species of flora recorded.

The property also holds significant rock art values.

The entire property lies within a strictly protected area, the Cavernas do Peruaçu National Park, established in 1999 under Brazilian federal legislation.

**Criterion (vii):** *Superlative natural phenomena or natural beauty or aesthetic importance*

The Peruaçu River Canyon, located within the Cavernas do Peruaçu National Park, comprises a vast terrain of karst canyons, caves, and associated rich biodiversity that together form a landscape of exceptional beauty. The nomination includes monumental karst landscape; extraordinary speleothems and geological formations; and unique biodiversity in an ecological transition zone. The karstification processes are displayed with breathtaking clarity and beauty, including a vertical variation of over 200 meters and successive collapse dolines, as well as colossal caves at various levels, with magnificent and diverse speleothem decorations, cliffs, towers, limestone arches, karren, natural bridges, stone forests, including some exceptionally large-sized examples of such features. The skylights from the semi-arid surface to the lush vegetation of the underworld support spectacular and beautiful vistas, whether viewed from above or from below. In particular, the Janelão Cave features impressive passages, with widths and heights exceeding 100 meters. Within it, immense openings allow the entry of sunlight, enabling vegetation to flourish in the vast chambers, contrasting with the striking architectural appearance of the rock formations and the semi-arid conditions at the land surface. Taken together, the geological and biological elements create a well-preserved and exceptionally scenic landscape.

**Criterion (viii):** *Earth's history and geological features*

The Peruaçu River basin contains the most extraordinary known and documented example of karstification of a fluvial system in the world. The landscape of the nominated property is an outstanding example of karst landforms in seasonally arid tropics and subtropics. Developed in carbonate rock, the distinct controlling geological factors and past climate changes that formed the nominated property are clearly evident, in particular an unusually stable tectonic environment in which the karst evolved: the São Francisco craton. With its genesis linked to the local fluviokarst, the

canyon is understood to have developed underground until its opening process occurred in the Plio-Pleistocene. Global climatic changes in the Quaternary are thought to have generated the deepening of the local base level, leading to significant collapses along the fluviokarst, from the Middle to Upper Pleistocene and creating the long, horizontal passages of the nominated property. The large caves feature a diverse array of speleothems and are characterized by horizontal passages of notable heights, resulting from major underground stream flows during past hydrologic regimes. The consequences and processes of cavern collapse are easily observed from above and below.

Throughout its 21 kilometers, the Canyon features a vertical variation of over 200 meters and successive collapse dolines, as well as colossal caves at various levels, with magnificent and diverse speleothem decorations, cliffs, towers, limestone arches, karren, natural bridges, and stone forests. The property contains the downstream section of the main underground water course, including the Janelão Cave, which contains 2.8 km of very impressive river passage and huge collapse skylights supporting forest ecosystems. As a highlight of this setting, on the edge of the Macacos doline lies what is considered the world's largest stalactite: the "Perna da Bailarina", measuring approximately 28 meters in length. Together, the geological and biological elements form a well-preserved landscape of exceptional scenic value.

### **Integrity**

The nominated property is sheltered by the Cavernas do Peruaçu National Park (CPNP), an integrally protected area under Brazilian legislation established in 1999. The entire extent of the Peruaçu River Canyon is included in the site. The karst in the region involves a significant set of about 500 cavities, including sinkholes, various caves, and a large collection of associated formations that express the diversity of the karstic environment and are well-preserved.

The applicable legislation is stringent regarding national parks as it prohibits any permanent human use. Tourism within the property (which includes several walking trails to visit caves and archaeological sites) is well managed. Access to caves is regulated by the park, with only certified guides allowed to accompany visitors.

The main threats to the Park's integrity arise from human occupation and the use of water resources in the Peruaçu River basin upstream of the Park, through livestock farming and agriculture. Ensuring the perennality of water resources in a semi-arid environment is the greatest challenge for the longterm maintenance of the area.

### **Protection**

The Peruaçu Canyon is fully encompassed within the Cavernas do Peruaçu National Park, established by Federal Decree on September 21st, 1999. The Park is classified as a strict protection area, with nature conservation as its primary objective.

The Park's Management Plan, approved in 2005, guides conservation-focused management and includes specific guidelines for the protection of speleological heritage, implemented with technical support from CECAV — the National Center for Research and Conservation of Caves, a specialized unit of Brazil's Biodiversity Conservation Institute (ICMbio).

The system established to provide protection and adequate management for the area is complex due to a combination of National Park and State Park, and the presence of a variety of stakeholders. While the management of the property meets the requirements of the Operational Guidelines, an integrated management plan is necessary and should give adequate emphasis not only to biodiversity values and to the protection of rock art, but also to the protection of vulnerable geological and geomorphological features and processes, which give the property its Outstanding Universal Value. The role of indigenous peoples and local communities in the management of the

area should be further promoted, for example, through community-based ecological tourism initiatives.

3. 4 Recommends the State Party to adapt the management plan ~~for~~ of the ~~nominated~~ property to:

a) address the vulnerable geological and geomorphological features and processes ~~for which~~ **give the property its** Outstanding Universal Value ~~is claimed in the management plan~~ and **ensure** that sufficient geological expertise is ~~ensured through management staff~~ **available**, to complement a strong and continuing commitment to biodiversity conservation,

b) **Further promote the participation of** ~~clarify the role of~~ local indigenous people ~~to assure their full and effective participation in the future governance and management of the nominated property, including in ecological tourism development,~~

c) include the conservation of the rock art sites of the ~~nominated~~ property and cultural values considered important by the indigenous, traditional and quilombola communities in the management plan and that conservation specialists and community representatives are invited to set out the parameters for visitation, necessary monitoring regimes, and the overall conservation constraints that might be necessary to limit visitor numbers,

d) ~~indicate a time frame for~~ **Further consolidate** ~~consolidating~~ the management structure, and ~~demonstrate~~ **ensure** that the management requirements ~~for inscription~~ **established by the Operational Guidelines** are communicated and understood by all stakeholders, rightsholders, landowners and management authorities, **taking into account the guidance provided in *Enhancing Our Heritage Toolkit 2.0*.**

4. 5 Encourages the State Party to conduct further research and documentation on both the cultural and biodiversity values of the nominated property, in addition to the recognised ~~potential~~ OUV related to geodiversity.

6. Takes note of the commitment assumed by the State Party to: a) propose to the World Heritage Committee the extension of the property's boundaries to encompass Indigenous areas, should the concerned community express interest in having part of their lands recognized as part of the property, in order to reinforce the property's buffer zone; b) guarantee that the indigenous Xacriabá community will retain the right to use the property for transit, as it is customary; and c) take measures to promote sustainable development opportunities in Indigenous lands located in the vicinity of the property, in order to ensure that the property is well integrated into its broader territorial context and provides benefits for local communities, in line with paragraphs 112, 119, and 214bis of the Operational Guidelines.

7. Requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 2027, a report on the implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations, and especially regarding the commitments mentioned on paragraph 5, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 49th session.