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CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE
WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

World Heritage Committee
Fifteenth Session

Carthage, Tunisia
9-13 December 1991

Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda: Monitoring of the State of Conservation of Natural World Heritage Sites and related technical problems

1. Dinosaur Provincial Park (Canada):

The Bureau noted that in order to accommodate the exploitation of some of the gas deposits under this site which are privately owned, the boundaries of this site have been modified to excise 1,415 acres and add 1,478 acres of higher geological value. Although the Bureau was satisfied that this swap met the approval of the Provincial Parks Branch of Alberta and the slanted drilling technology to be employed will not have adverse impacts on the integrity of the site, the Bureau observed that drilling of any wells inside the Park would cause greater concern. The Delegate of Canada assured the Bureau that impacts of drilling on the integrity of the Park will be closely monitored by representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations and the Bureau and the Committee would be alerted if any threats arose. A revised map of the new boundaries was expected to be sent to the Secretariat.

The recommendations of the Bureau were transmitted to the Canadian authorities by letter of 12 August 1991. In a reply dated 10 October 1991 the Canadian authorities have indicated that the revision of the boundaries of this site was being delayed and a full report, including a map showing changes in the boundary of the site, was expected to be finalized by the end of October 1991. The reply from the Canadian authorities has also been transmitted to IUCN.

2. Wood Buffalo National Park (Canada):

The Bureau recalled that the Committee, at its last session, expressed serious concerns regarding the infection of the remaining 3,200 bison in the Park by bucellosis and tuberculosis, as well as with logging operations. The Bureau was informed of a longer term threat to the integrity of the site caused by activities upstream along the Peace/Athabasca Rivers, which include the expansion of pulp mills, logging operations and dam construction resulting in water pollution and loss of water quality, changes in the flooding regime and the gradual drying-up of the Athabasca Delta. The Bureau noted that the large surface area is no longer an adequate basis to ensure the long-term integrity of the Wood Buffalo National Park, and similar World Heritage sites such as Yellowstone (USA), Serengeti (Tanzania) and Banc d'Arguin (Mauritania), and that an ecosystem management approach taking into account activities outside the Park would be required.

After listening to the detailed response of the Delegate of Canada (see paragraphs 32 and 33 of the Rapporteur's Report of the fifteenth session of the Bureau, i.e. Document SC-91/CONF.002/2) the Bureau acknowledged that the Canadian Government was taking appropriate measures to preserve the integrity of this Park. The Bureau requested the Canadian authorities to make special efforts, both within the Park and throughout the entire drainage basin, in order to retain and restore the integrity on the types and nature of technologies which are currently used for mitigating negative impacts on the Peace and Athabasca Rivers due to development activities. The Bureau agreed with the IUCN report that the Wood Buffalo National Park will, in many ways, be a test case for conservation of large, remote reserves and could provide lessons applicable elsewhere.

The observations and recommendations of the Bureau were transmitted to the Canadian authorities by letter of 12 August 1991. In response, the Canadian authorities have transmitted, by letter of 10 October 1991 and attachments, detailed information on the following:

- a) the membership, roles and responsibilities, and terms of reference of a Northern Bison Management Board (NBMB) that was set up in June 1991 to develop a plan for the management of bison in the Wood Buffalo National Park by the end of 1992;
- b) the types of environmental impact studies that have been carried out and administrative mechanisms that have been set up for the Biological Monitoring of the Peace and Athabasca Rivers, and

- c) an update on the status of pulp mills in the area, their impacts on water quality of the Peace and Athabasca Rivers and the mitigative measures that have been undertaken to monitor water quality.

The response of the Canadian authorities to the concerns and recommendations of the Bureau has been transmitted to IUCN.

3. Sangay National Park (Ecuador)

In August 1991, IUCN informed the Secretariat of a proposal for a road construction project in this site and requested the Secretariat to obtain information on the proposal from the Ecuadorean authorities. The Secretariat transmitted the information provided by IUCN to the Ecuadorean authorities by letter of 21 August 1991. In a reply dated 17 October 1991 the Ecuadorean authorities informed the Secretariat that:

- a) there is a proposal to construct a road, 8 km of which would traverse the extreme south of the Park;
- b) no environmental impact study of this road construction project has so far been undertaken, and
- c) the Sub-Secretariat on Forestry, Natural Resources and the Management of Natural Heritage and Protected Areas of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock has requested the Ministry of Public Works to halt all construction activities until such time as the necessary impact studies have been completed. The letter from the Ecuadorean authorities has been transmitted to IUCN.

4. Simien National Park (Ethiopia)

The Bureau recalled that this site was one of the first natural areas to be inscribed on the World Heritage List. It was abandoned by the staff of the Wildlife Conservation Organization in 1985 due to civil unrest in the area. Since then there are no reliable reports of its condition. A new government is now being formed and hence the Bureau requested that the Secretariat contact the Permanent Delegation of Ethiopia to UNESCO in order to develop mechanisms to obtain assessment of the present status of this site.

The recommendations of the Bureau were transmitted to the Permanent Delegate of Ethiopia to UNESCO by letter of 21 August 1991, and this letter was transmitted to the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Organization which has submitted a detailed report providing information on the status of conservation of the Simien National Park. According to the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation

Organization, the past seven years of civil unrest in the area had completely destroyed Park infrastructure but had not seriously affected natural resources and wildlife values of the Park. The report on the Simien National Park has been transmitted to IUCN.

5. Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve (Honduras)

The Bureau recalled that the Honduran authorities had requested the Committee, at its last session, to include this site in the List of World Heritage in Danger. The Committee had suggested at that time that the Honduran authorities submit a request for international assistance from the World Heritage Fund. The Bureau noted that such a request had not yet been received and urged the Secretariat and IUCN to work through National MAB and IUCN networks in order to bring forward a request for the consideration of the Committee at its forthcoming session.

The recommendations of the Bureau were transmitted to the Executive Director of the Asociacion Hondurena de Ecologica, which was responsible for the management of this site, by letter of 21 August 1991. Subsequently, the Secretariat was informed that a Department of Protected Areas and Forestry had been vested with the authority to manage all natural heritage areas in Honduras and was requested to send all relevant materials to prepare a request for inscribing this site on the List of World Heritage in Danger to this new Government Department. Such a request is expected to be received shortly.