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CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE
WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Bureau of the World Heritage Committee
Sixteenth Session

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, 6-10 July 1992
Room XVI

**Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda: Monitoring of the state of
conservation of World Heritage Natural Properties and related
technical problems**

1. At its fifteenth session held at Carthage, Tunisia, during 9-13 December 1991, the Committee received reports from representatives of IUCN and the Secretariat on the state of conservation of the following World Heritage properties: Wet Tropics of Queensland (Australia), Iguazu National Park (Argentina) and Iguazu National Park (Brazil), Pirin National Park and Srebarna Biosphere Reserve (Bulgaria), Dinosaur Provincial Park and Wood Buffalo National Park (Canada), Talamanca-La Amistad (Costa Rica/Panama), Plitvice National Park (Croatia), Sangay National Park (Ecuador), Simien National Park (Ethiopia), Mt. Nimba Nature Reserve (Cote d'Ivoire/Guinea), Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve (Honduras), Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (India), Royal Chitwan National Park (Nepal), Djoudj National Park (Senegal), Garajonay National Park (Spain), Selous Game Reserve (Tanzania), Olympic National Park (USA), Durmitor National Park (Yugoslavia), and Garamba and Kahuzi Biega National Parks (Zaire). The Committee also made observations pertaining to the conservation of the Niokolo-Koba National Park (Senegal) while approving a request for international assistance from the authorities responsible for the management of this site.

2. The observations and recommendations of the Committee with respect to each property whose state of conservation was reviewed were subsequently transmitted by the Secretariat to the authorities of the States Parties concerned. Progress reports for some of the properties for which States Parties have provided information and clarification with respect to the points raised by the Committee are given below:

3. **Wet Tropics of Queensland (Australia):** When this site was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1988, the Committee requested IUCN to provide a report on the state of conservation in 1991. At its last session the Committee agreed that the submission of this report be delayed until its next session in order to enable IUCN to include the findings of a site visit scheduled for early 1992. This site visit had been undertaken and IUCN will submit a state of conservation report on this site at the time of the meeting of the Bureau.
4. **Srebarna Biosphere Reserve (Bulgaria):** At its last session, the Committee recognized that due to the slow drying of the lake-bed, exacerbated upstream development projects, impacts of nearby pig farms and a rise in the wild boar population, the water quality and balance in this small (600 ha) World Heritage site has deteriorated to such an extent that the site is no longer ecologically viable. Large colonies of water birds, except for the Dalmatian Pelican, were absent and many of the passerine species have emigrated and occur only in low numbers. As recommended by the Committee, the Secretariat, via letter dated 3 February 1992, requested the Permanent Delegate of Bulgaria to UNESCO to contact and obtain the agreement of the management authority of the Srebarna Biosphere Reserve to nominate this site to the List of World Heritage in Danger. The Secretariat has not yet received a reply from the Bulgarian authorities to this letter. In the meantime, IUCN has undertaken a mission and made an assessment of whether this site still meets natural heritage criterion (iv). IUCN will provide a report on the state of conservation of this site at the time of the meeting of the Bureau.
5. **Dinosaur Provincial Park (Canada):** At its last session the Committee noted that IUCN agreed, in principle, to deleting 1,415 acres of privately-owned land comprising natural gas deposits from this site and including 1,478 acres of higher geological value, and that the technology used to drill gas wells had low impacts. However, the Committee pointed out that it would be concerned if the drilling extended to areas within the World Heritage site and requested IUCN to evaluate maps, submitted by Canada, showing locations of the drilling sites. These observations of the Committee were transmitted to the Canadian authorities by the Secretariat in a letter dated 4 February 1992. In their reply of 9 April 1992 the Canadian authorities have informed the Secretariat that the maps submitted at the last session of the Committee were not official and that they will provide official documents to the Secretariat and IUCN during April-May 1992. IUCN will evaluate these maps and report on the locations of drilling sites vis-à-vis the revised boundary of the Park at the time of the meeting of the Bureau.
6. **Wood Buffalo National Park (Canada):** At its last session the Committee reviewed several issues pertaining to the conservation of this site; about 3,200 of the Park's bison being affected by

brucellosis and tuberculosis, termination of rights for logging within the Park and development activities in the entire drainage basin of the Peace-Athabasca Rivers, both within as well as outside of the Park boundary. The Committee expressed satisfaction with some of the initiatives launched by the Canadian authorities to address these issues and suggested that they regularly provide information on the state of conservation of the Wood Buffalo National Park. The Committee's suggestions were transmitted by the Secretariat to the Canadian authorities via letter dated 4 February 1992. In their reply, dated 9 April 1992, the Canadian authorities have provided the following information:

i) the diseases of bison, in and around the Park, are being dealt with through a planning process, under the auspices of the Northern Buffalo Management Board, whose Terms of Reference are guided by the principles of respect for the national park values and ecological integrity of the site.

ii) negotiations for terminating logging within the site are being actively pursued and no logging has occurred in the Park since March 1991.

iii) Parks Canada is sponsoring a technical workshop on the Peace-Athabasca Delta in May 1992, to promote inter-jurisdictional co-operation in the management of the Delta, and to initiate a 3-year study and planning programme to find a solution to the problem of the drying of the Delta. The Northern Rivers Study Board is addressing water quality concerns of the Peace/Athabasca Rivers as part of a project costing 12 million Canadian dollars

iv) the ecosystem approach to Park management will be a key consideration in the review of the Management Plan of the site, scheduled for 1993, and corrective actions that are now being taken are also, for the most part, based on this approach and consideration.

7. **Talamanca-La Amistad (Costa Rica/Panama):** The Committee at its last session urged the Costa Rican authorities to implement an IUCN recommendation to modify the boundary of the Talamanca-La Amistad Reserves of Costa Rica by deleting four Indian reserves in the north-eastern Atlantic sector of the site. As recommended by the Committee the Secretariat, by letter of 4 February 1992, requested the Costa Rican authorities to consider revising the boundary of the site and submit a map showing the new boundary. Such a map showing the revised boundary of the Talamanca-La Amistad Reserves of Costa Rica has not yet been received.

The Secretariat informed the Panamanian authorities, by letter of 6 February 1992, that the Committee was deeply concerned that 59,000 ha of the La Amistad National Park of Panama had been given to Texaco for oil exploitation, without consulting the Panamanian conservation authorities and in contravention to the law creating

the Park. The Panamanian authorities who participated in the IVth World Parks Congress, held in Caracas, Venezuela, in February 1992, informed representatives from the Secretariat and IUCN who participated in the Congress, that due to the intervention of several national and international organizations concerned with nature conservation, the Government of Panama has decided to abandon its proposals for oil exploitation in the La Amistad National Park of Panama.

8. **Plitvice Lake National Park (Croatia):** At its last session the Committee expressed deep regret and concern regarding effects of the unrest in the area on the state of conservation of this site and expressed the hope that the conditions would soon return to normal to allow a joint UNESCO/IUCN mission to review damage and plan rehabilitation programmes. A member of the Secretariat who visited the site in January 1992 in connection with the conservation of Dubrovnik, was informed that Green Peace Volunteers from the United Kingdom had gone on mission to this site. However, there has been no written report arising from that mission which was accessible to the Secretariat. IUCN is in contact with the Green Peace Office in UK and is attempting to obtain information that may have been published as a result of the mission. In the meantime, the Secretariat has received preliminary announcements concerning the organization, by the Institute for the Protection of Historical Monuments in Zagreb, of an international meeting on the 'Effects of War on the Environment', which among other issues will also address the conservation of Plitvice Lake National Park. This international meeting is scheduled to be convened in Zagreb, from 13-17 April, 1993. The documents received by the Secretariat in this regard have been transmitted to IUCN for review and comments

9. **Sangay National Park (Ecuador):** The Committee at its last session expressed its satisfaction with the fact that the Sub-Secretariat of Forestry and Natural Resources in Ecuador was able to halt the construction of a road through this site until environmental impact studies are completed. The Secretariat via a letter of 4 February 1992, transmitted the compliments of the Committee to the Ecuadorean authorities for taking timely action and informed them of possibilities for technical assistance available from the World Heritage Fund for undertaking studies to assess the impact of the road-construction project. The Ecuadorean authorities have not responded to the Secretariat's letter. The Secretariat and IUCN expect to obtain additional information on the status of conservation of this site to submit to the Bureau at the time of its meeting.

10. **Simien National Park (Ethiopia):** At its last session the Committee was happy to note that after a seven-year period of civil unrest this site has once again become accessible and the reconstruction of park infrastructure which was completely destroyed could be commenced without any further delay. The

Secretariat, by letter dated 4 February 1992, informed the Ethiopian authorities that the Committee had set aside a sum of US \$ 50,000 from the 1992 budget of the World Heritage Fund as a contribution to rehabilitate Simien National Park and that the funds would be made available for appropriate projects developed in consultation with IUCN and the Secretariat. The Ethiopian authorities, by their letter of 27 February 1992, have expressed their gratitude to the assistance offered by the Committee and proposed to use the US\$50,000 as follows: rehabilitation of roads (US\$13,000); construction of buildings (US\$22,000); purchase of field equipment and horses (US\$10,000); spares for four-wheel drive vehicles (US\$5,000). The 18-month project will also receive a national contribution of US\$45,000 covering staff salaries (US\$22,000) and operational and maintenance costs of the Park (US\$23,000). IUCN agreed with the aims, objectives and costing of the project and the Chairman agreed that the sum approved by the Committee could be used as proposed by the Ethiopian authorities. The Secretariat is awaiting information from the Ethiopian authorities providing a breakdown of amounts requested for road-rehabilitation and building construction which is needed for the establishment of a contract for project implementation.

11. **Mt. Nimba Nature Reserve (Côte d'Ivoire/Guinea):** The Bureau's attention is drawn to the fact that the Committee, at its last session, found that the site of the proposed iron-ore mining project was within the Mt. Nimba Nature Reserve inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981. In the light of an evaluation carried out by IUCN the Committee took cognizance of the fact that the new boundaries proposed by the Guinean authorities, though intended to excise that part of the site where iron-ore mining is expected to take place, will also reduce the Reserve's area by about 30% and seriously endanger the integrity of the values for which Mt. Nimba was originally granted World Heritage status. For instance, the montane and moist forest areas of the Reserve would be reduced by 50% and the area of montane grasslands would decrease by 30%. The Committee also observed that the site did not have management plans and programmes for ensuring long-term protection. Furthermore, the Committee was informed that an independent environmental impact study of the iron-ore mining project had not been carried out.

The Committee was of the view that the proposed reduction in the size of the Reserve's area was in itself a major threat to the World Heritage status of the site. The Committee found it likely that some of the features which made this site worthy of World Heritage status were located within the area proposed to be deleted. Furthermore, the Committee also recalled that additional habitats of Mt. Nimba within Côte d'Ivoire were added to this site in 1982 and since then the World Heritage site has been a transborder property of Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. The Committee was concerned that the Government of Côte d'Ivoire had not been consulted in any of the negotiations related to the modification of the boundary of the site.

The Committee concluded that the Mt. Nimba Nature Reserve, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981, was seriously at risk from a variety of threats, primarily the proposed iron-ore mining project. As instructed by the Committee, the Secretariat contacted the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, and requested them to nominate this site, in accordance with Article 11, paragraph 4 of the Convention, for inclusion in the List of World Heritage in Danger.

The Government of Guinea has proposed to organize, in co-operation with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, a meeting to bring the relevant authorities of the two States Parties together and discuss the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee. The Chairman approved a sum of US\$19,500 for the organization of this meeting which, though it was originally scheduled to be held in March 1992, is now expected to be convened from 19-24 June 1992. The outcome of this meeting will be reported at the forthcoming session of the Bureau.

12. **Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (India):** The Bureau may recall that this site had been threatened by the invasion of the Sanctuary by the people of the Bodo tribe in 1989, and since then the Indian authorities had not responded to the Committee's recommendation that this site be nominated for inclusion in the List of World Heritage in Danger. At its last session, the Delegate of Thailand was of the view that the Committee had the authority, under Article 11, paragraph 4, to include this site in the List of World Heritage in Danger without waiting for a formal request from the Indian authorities. The Committee, however, wished that the Secretariat reiterates the Committee's concern to the Indian authorities and find ways and means to obtain a response for submission to the Bureau.

The Secretariat, via letter of 6 February 1992, transmitted the concerns and recommendations of the Committee to the Indian authorities. The Secretariat and IUCN also invited Mr. Deb Roy, Additional Inspector General of Forests (Wildlife), Ministry of Environment and Forests, to present a paper on the status of conservation of Manas Wildlife Sanctuary at a workshop on the World Heritage Convention held from 18-19 February 1992 as part of the IVth World Park's Congress in Caracas, Venezuela. Mr. Roy accepted this invitation and informed the workshop participants that the Indian Government has regained control of most parts of Manas and has started an investment programme to reconstruct infrastructure damaged by militants. He also mentioned that the staff of the Sanctuary has regained strength and morale and are increasingly able to curtail the movements of militants who appeared to have used the Sanctuary as a refuge to hide from the security forces of the Indian Government. Mr. Roy was keen to emphasize that the damage caused by a militant faction of the Bodo tribe who invaded the Sanctuary was largely restricted to infrastructure which could be rehabilitated over the next few years. In his view, the

ecological integrity of the site had not been seriously threatened. A programme for the development of local people living in the vicinity of the Sanctuary, launched by WWF-India, is expected improve relations between people and management. Mr. Roy was of the view that the inclusion of this site on the List of World Heritage in Danger is unlikely to have any additional impacts on efforts that are being currently undertaken by the Indian Government to rehabilitate the site.

Mr. Roy informed a member of the Secretariat, who undertook a mission to India during March 1992, that a draft of his paper will be officially transmitted to the Secretariat, as a response to the Secretariat's letter of 6 February 1992. The receipt of the draft of the paper is awaited.

13. **Niokolo-Koba National Park (Senegal):** At its last session, the Committee while approving a sum of US\$45,000 for the purchase of two all-terrain vehicles, recommended that the Secretariat request the Senegalese authorities to provide details of schedules and technical modalities for the implementation of measures to mitigate the environmental impacts of the road construction project in this Park. The Bureau may wish to recall that the Director-General, by letter of 3 July 1991, had already requested this information from the Senegalese authorities on the basis of the recommendation of the Bureau made at its fifteenth session held in Paris during 17-21 June 1991. The Senegalese authorities sent to the Secretariat on 11 December 1991 a brief description of the state of execution of mitigative measures undertaken, before the commencement of the road construction project, in relation to the following: legal protection; co-operation between Park authorities and other public and private agencies concerned with the road construction project; re-routing of traffic along the Bembou-Tambacounda cotton route; penalties and delays; and studies and preliminary measures. The Senegalese authorities also submitted a 32-page report, dated June 1991 and entitled 'Niokolo Koba and Badiar National Parks: Rehabilitation of Protected Areas and Eco-management of their Peripheries', which, among other topics, includes an estimation of costs for the implementation of measures to mitigate the impacts of the road construction project. All the information provided by the Senegalese authorities has been transmitted to IUCN.

14. **Durmitor National Park (Yugoslavia):** At its last session, the Committee was concerned about proposals for the construction of a hydro-electric dam on the Tara River which would flood the Tara Canyon and affect water quality of the River. A large asphalt plant upstream was already causing pollution of the River. The Secretariat, through the assistance of the Permanent Delegation of Yugoslavia in UNESCO, has obtained reports which address the concerns of the Committee and has transmitted those reports to IUCN for review. IUCN will report on the status of conservation of this site at the time of the meeting of the Bureau.

15. Apart from the sites mentioned above, whose states of conservation were reviewed by the Committee at its last session, the Secretariat has also received new information on other sites which are described below:

i) **Manovo-Gounda St. Floris National Park (Central African Republic):**

The President of this State Party, by letter of 26 February 1992 addressed to the Director-General of the UNESCO, indicated his intention to constitute this site as a 'free ecological zone' and concede its management to an International Consultant Agency based in Paris, France. The proposal has been transmitted to IUCN for review. The Bureau is to receive a report on this matter.

ii) **Hierapolis-Pamukkale (Turkey):**

The English version of the 'Preservation and Management Plan' for this mixed site, including summarized proceedings of an international workshop organized with support from the World Heritage Fund by the Ministry of Culture, Turkey, during 1-3 July 1991, has been published. The Ministry of Culture, Turkey, has kindly sent copies for distribution among members of the Committee. IUCN, ICOMOS and ICCROM have also been sent copies in order to enable them to follow up on the implementation of the Plan.

iii) **Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls (Zambia/Zimbabwe):**

The Secretariat has been informed, by facsimile letter dated 4 May 1992, by a group of consulting engineers in Zimbabwe that a preliminary environmental impact assessment of the Batoka Gorge Hydro-Electric Power Plant to be developed on the Batoka Gorge Dam on the Zambezi River is currently underway. They have requested information on the boundaries of the World Heritage site of Victoria Falls and the legal implications if one of the gorges to be developed is located within the World Heritage site. The Secretariat is contacting the group of consulting engineers and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation to obtain additional information, and has transmitted a copy of the facsimile letter received by IUCN for review and for further monitoring of the state of conservation of this site.

16. Representatives of IUCN will provide additional information on the sites described above and report on the state of conservation of other natural and/or mixed sites, at the time of the meeting of the Bureau.

17. The Bureau is requested to review the above reports on the state of conservation of the sites in the light of the complementary information provided by the representatives of IUCN, and advise the Secretariat of their observations and recommendations.

18. The monitoring of the state of conservation of World Heritage properties and related technical problems were among the themes discussed by the participants in the World Heritage Convention workshop, organized by the Secretariat and IUCN on February 18-19 1992 as a part of the IVth World Parks Congress in Caracas, Venezuela. The suggestions on monitoring made by the workshop participants will be presented to the Bureau under item 13 of the agenda.