Enhancing the IUCN World Heritage Programme II – Focus Europe
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37th World Heritage Committee Session
Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 16-27 June 2013

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The 37th Session of the World Heritage Committee took place in the Kingdom of Cambodia, in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap-Angkor, from 16th to 27th June 2013. It was organized by UNESCO and the National Commission of Cambodia with the support of the Office of the Council of Ministers.
The Committee is a governing body responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. It decides on new inscriptions on the World Heritage List. It examines State of Conservation reports and also decides on the inscription or deletion of properties on the List of World Heritage in Danger.
The 21 States Parties of the current World Heritage Committee are the following: Algeria, Cambodia, Colombia, Estonia, Ethiopia, France, Germany, India, Iraq, Japan, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Qatar, Russian Federation, Senegal, Serbia, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, and United Arab Emirates.

During the 19th session of the General Assembly (19-21 November 2013), 12 seats will have to be filled. Outgoing members in 2013 are: Cambodia, Estonia, Ethiopia, France, Iraq, Mali, Mexico, Russian Federation, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, United Arab Emirates.
IUCN’s advisory role

Ahead of the annual World Heritage Committee meeting, IUCN submits its recommendations regarding the inscriptions of new sites following a rigorous evaluation process through which it works with members on the ground, scientific experts, independent feedback and desk reviews.

IUCN also submits “state of conservation” reports for sites under threat or sites that are already on the danger list or that it considers should be.

IUCN’s delegation at the 37th WHC session comprised of experts representing both the IUCN Secretariat and WCPA. It was our intention to cover a broad spectrum of expert issues and as many geographical regions as possible.
State of Conservation reports

Each year, IUCN prepares State of Conservation Reports for about 60 of the most threatened natural World Heritage Sites in collaboration with UNESCO, and with ICOMOS for mixed natural and cultural sites. These reports present key threats to the sites’ Outstanding Universal Value, identify the practical actions needed to improve their state of conservation, and are based on information provided by the State Parties to the Convention, as well as IUCN's network of experts.

54 SoC reports have been prepared for the 37th WHC session.
World Heritage in Danger

IUCN recommended three sites to be inscribed on the List of World Heritage Sites in Danger because of significant threats to their Outstanding Universal Value. These were: Virgin Komi Forests in Russia, Lake Turkana in Kenya and East Rennell in the Solomon Islands.

The Committee followed IUCN's advice for East Rennell while Virgin Komi Forests and Lake Turkana were not added to the Danger List.
Nominations proposed for 2013

13 Evaluation missions: 9 Natural sites, 4 Mixed sites

• Guinée Bissau Archipel des Bijagós – Motom Moranghajogo
• Kenya Mount Kenya-Lewa Wildllife Conservancy (extension )
• Lesotho Sehlabathebe National Park (extension)
• Namibia Namib Sand Sea
• China Xinjiang Tianshan
• India Great Himalayan National Park
• Philippines Mt. Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary
• Tajikistan Tajik National Park (Mountains of the Pamirs)
• Vietnam Cat Tien National Park
• Canada Pimachiowin Aki
• Italy Mount Etna
• Russian Federation Sviyazhsk Historical, Architectural, Natural and Landscape Complex
• Mexico El Pinacate and Gran Desierto de Altar Biosphere Reserve
New inscriptions

19 new inscriptions (14 cultural, 5 natural, 3 extensions). Following expert recommendations of IUCN, five new WH natural sites have been inscribed on the list:

- Xinjiang Tianshan (China)
- Mount Etna (Italy)
- El Pinacate and Gran Desierto de Altar Biosphere Reserve (Mexico)
- Namib Sand Sea (Namibia)
- Tajik National Park (Tajikistan)

The World Heritage List now includes 981 properties. These include 759 cultural, 193 natural and 29 mixed sites.
Xinjiang Tianshan

(vii) (ix) 606,833 + 491,103 ha

Xinjiang Tianshan stands out for its exceptional scenic values and natural features - from red bed canyons, high peaks and glaciers to beautiful wetlands, meadows and steppe. Stark contrasts between the mountain areas and vast Central Asian deserts, and between the dry south slopes and the much wetter north slope create astounding visual impact.
Mount Etna

(viii) 19,237 + 26,220 ha

Mount Etna is a large basaltic composite volcano covering an area of 1,178 km² from sea level up to over 3,300 m. Mount Etna is the result of a complex eruptive history which can be traced back over 500,000 years and its activity has been documented by humans for at least 2,700 years – making it one of the world's longest documented records of historical volcanism.
El Pinacate and Gran Desierto de Altar Biosphere Reserve

(vii) (viii) (x) 714,566 + 354,871 ha

The dunes can reach 200 meters in height and contain linear dunes, star dunes and dome dunes, displaying enormous and constantly changing contrasts in terms of form and color. The combination of all these features results in a highly diverse and visually stunning desert landscape.
The Namib Sand Sea is a unique coastal fog desert encompassing a diverse array of large, shifting dunes. It is an outstanding example of the scenic, geomorphological, ecological and evolutionary consequences of wind-driven processes interacting with geology and biology.
Tajik National Park (Mountains of the Pamir)

(vii) (viii) 2,611,674 ha

Tajik National Park stands out as a very large protected area, with a stark treeless landscape of exceptional natural beauty. The outstanding scenic values are enhanced by the landform juxtaposition of heavily-glaciated high peaks and high plateaux with an alpine desert character. It’s Tajikistan’s first natural WH site.
Summarizing the 37th WHC session

“The past year has been a good one for natural World Heritage. It is notable for the high quality of the new nominations that were added to the World Heritage List and for the constructive process and good technical deliberations that led to the decisions on sites that were deferred and referred.”

• Meeting the standards

• Mounting pressure

• Civil society’s growing role
The 38th World Heritage Committee session will take place in Doha, Qatar from 15 to 25 June 2014. The list of World Heritage nominations proposed for 2014 consists of 7 natural sites and 3 mixed sites:

- Okavango Delta (Namibia)
- South China Karst (China, extension)
- Trang An Landscape Complex (Vietnam, mixed)
- Cat Ba Archipelago (Vietnam)
- Wadden Sea (Denmark / Germany, extension)
- Stevns Klint (Denmark)
- Ensemble tectono-volcanique de la Chaine des Puys et de la faille de Limagne (France)
- Białowieża Forest (Poland / Belarus, extension and renomination)
- Arrábida (Portugal, mixed)
- Ancient Maya City and Protected Tropical Forests of Calakmul, Campeche (Mexico, mixed, renomination and extension)

Looking ahead
Thank you!

http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/wcpa_worldheritage