

8. Okapi Wildlife Reserve (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (N 718)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List

1996

Criteria

(x)

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

1997

Application of the Reinforced monitoring mechanism at the property since 2007 (31 COM 7A.32)

Threats for which the property was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger

- a) Impact of conflict: looting of infrastructure, poaching of elephants;
- b) Presence of gold mining sites inside the property.

Desired state of conservation required for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger

No desired state of conservation has yet been established.

Corrective measures identified

The following corrective measures were identified by the 2006 UNESCO / IUCN mission and adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 30th session (Vilnius, 2006):

- a) Ensure the immediate withdrawal of military personnel of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) army involved in poaching, ivory trafficking and illegal mining;
- b) Close down and prevent all illegal mining operations inside the property;
- c) Suspend the rehabilitation works on the RN4 national road crossing the property, to allow for a proper Environmental Impact Assessment and until proper measures to reduce its expected environmental impact are put in place;
- d) Establish a trust fund for the rehabilitation of the DRC World Heritage properties;
- e) Establish permanent cooperation between the political and military authorities at provincial level, the United Nations Organization Mission in DRC (MONUC) and the authority responsible for the management of the property (ICCN) to eliminate illegal activities in and around the property;
- f) In cooperation with the Government of Uganda, stop the illegal trafficking of timber, minerals and ivory across the DRC/Uganda border in north-eastern DRC;
- g) Prepare a forest zoning plan for the forest areas adjacent to the property to protect it from negative impacts resulting from unsustainable forest exploitation;
- h) Legalize and scale-up the pilot system put in place by ICCN to regulate and monitor immigration as well as traffic on the RN4 road, including the establishment of a permit system with transit charges;
- i) Take measures to reinforce and reinvigorate the guard force and to improve its efficiency.

Timeframe for the implementation of the corrective measures

No timeframe was set so far.

Previous Committee Decisions

29 COM 7A.4; 30 COM 7A.8; 31 COM 7A.8

International Assistance

Total amount provided to the property: USD 63,000 for preparation of nomination, guard training, camp construction and to combat illegal poaching in the property.

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

Total amount provided to the property: First phase of the UNF and Belgium funded programme for the Conservation of the DRC World Heritage properties ("DRC programme"). (2001–2005): approximately USD 250,000. Current phase (2005-2008): USD 300,000.

Previous monitoring missions

1996 and 2006: UNESCO monitoring missions; several other UNESCO missions in the framework of the DRC programme.

Main threats identified in previous reports

- a) Extensive poaching of large mammals, in particular elephants;
- b) Mining activities inside the property;
- c) Uncontrolled migration into the villages located within the property;
- d) Illegal timber exploitation in the Ituri forest, which might affect the property in the near future;
- e) Planned rehabilitation of the National Road RN4 crossing the property, for which no proper Environmental Impact Assessment was conducted.

Current conservation issues

On 1 February 2008, a report of the state of conservation of the five DRC World Heritage properties was submitted by the State Party. The report provides a brief overview of on-going park management activities, but unfortunately does not provide detailed information on the implementation of the corrective measures.

In 2007, field work on an inventory of the entire property was completed. A final report is currently under preparation, which will be available before the 32nd session. A first summary of the preliminary results was received by the World Heritage Centre on 15 April 2008.

The study considers the distribution and frequency of large mammals as well as human activities in the property, evaluating the impact since the beginning of the conflict (1996-2006). The main results are summarized hereunder:

- a. All important flagship species, including elephant, okapi and chimpanzee and eleven other species of primate were found during the inventory. Most of the unique habitats, including the inselbergs with an endemic flora, are intact;
- b. The elephant population has been reduced by 48% since the 1995 census, with an estimated loss of 3,260 elephants to poaching. A detailed history of elephant poaching shows episodic periods of intense poaching over the decade of the conflict, with severe poaching during periods of conflict or instability;
- c. Populations of the endemic okapi have decreased by 43 %, with a loss of an estimated 2,000 animals;

- d. There are also serious population declines in the 5 species of duiker, from 26% to 59%, depending on the species;
- e. Evidence of human activities, in particular poaching, was found widely across the entire Reserve, but with significant lower incidence in the proposed integral protection zone;
- f. No recent evidence of elephant poaching was recorded, indicating that recent efforts of ICCN to curb poaching are successful;
- g. Small-scale mining was also recorded in several areas, but much of the evidence was old, suggesting that the campaign to remove the miners has been effective.

In conclusion, the results show that the populations of flagship species, the key motivation for the inscription of the property on the World Heritage List, have been seriously reduced. Especially the results on okapi are very disturbing as, unlike elephants, they were not known to be targeted by armed poachers. Population trends of duikers are showing that current hunting pressure, including hunting by local people, is unsustainable.

The study clearly demonstrates that poaching has had a significant impact on the outstanding universal value of the property. However, as no key species were lost, a recovery of the outstanding universal value is possible if hunting and other pressure can be controlled. The final results will also provide an important input to develop a proposal for the Desired state of conservation required for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger.

With the security situation in the Okapi Wildlife Reserve much better than in the other properties situated in the eastern part of the DRC, following progress was achieved towards some of the set corrective measures:

- a) *Ensure the immediate withdrawal of military personnel of the DRC army involved in poaching, ivory trafficking and illegal mining:*

Reserve authorities have been able to further consolidate the situation, after the large scale anti-poaching operation organised in 2006 with assistance from the World Heritage Fund. The strengthened collaboration with military and administrative authorities and the organisation of joint operations with the military has proven its efficiency in combating armed poaching in the areas previously not under the control of ICCN. Park authorities estimate that they now control 95% of the total property. Current elephant poaching is reported to have decreased by 85 %.

- b) *Close down and prevent all illegal mining operations inside the property:*

All the illegal mines are now closed down and no new illegal mining operation inside the property was reported. The fact that 95% of the reserve is now under ICCN control has been critical to maintaining the closure of the mines. ICCN estimates that a strong involvement of the provincial authorities will be crucial to sustain these achievements. Therefore, the property's authorities are sensitizing the newly instated provincial authorities on the need to safeguard the integrity of the Reserve.

The issue of mining concessions attributed by the Ministry of mines so far has not been resolved and this issue will be reported on in the general report of the DRC properties, in document *WHC-08/32.COM/7A* (point 31).

- c) *Suspend the rehabilitation works on the RN4 national road crossing the property:*

The rehabilitation works on the RN4 restarted after a number of additional mitigating measures were agreed with ICCN. On 15 April 2008, the World Heritage Centre finally received a copy of the environmental management plan prepared in July 2007, after the rehabilitation works were suspended at its request. Unfortunately, additional mitigation measures have focussed almost exclusively on measures to limit and mitigate direct impact of the construction works, including measures for the benefit of local communities, but have

not targeted long term impacts of the road rehabilitation on the values of the property. Works are now completed and the road is open to traffic since April. The World Heritage Centre has received reports that since the reopening of the road, the rehabilitation of the road has led to an important increase in illegal exploitation of forest products in the vicinity of the Reserve, in particular timber and bush meat. The World Heritage Centre and IUCN consider that the environmental management plan is not sufficient to mitigate these long term impacts, in particular potential increased immigration into the Reserve, as well as increased trade in illegal forest products.

d) *Establish a trust fund for the rehabilitation of the DRC World Heritage properties:*

Efforts to create a trust fund are under way and are reported on in the general report of the DRC properties, in document *WHC-08/32.COM/7A* (point 31).

e) *Establish permanent cooperation between the political and military authorities at provincial level, MONUC and ICCN to eliminate illegal activities in and around the property:*

Although no formal permanent cooperation between ICCN and the political and military authorities has been established, the Reserve authority is pursuing its sensitization work towards military and political authorities at the provincial level and joint patrols have been organised with the military. There is no permanent cooperation with MONUC, which is less active in this region, but there are some sporadic contacts.

f) *In cooperation with the Government of Uganda, stop the illegal trafficking of timber, minerals and ivory across the DRC/Uganda border in north-eastern DRC:*

No progress could be made so far by the State Party.

The World Heritage Centre has continued its exchange with the secretariat of the Convention on Illegal Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), as requested by the World Heritage Committee at its 30th session (Vilnius, 2006). At its 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, member States to the *Convention* requested the CITES secretariat to collaborate with the World Heritage Centre to address illegal trade issues. The World Heritage Centre and CITES are now discussing to organise early 2009 a capacity building programme for targeted border post officials.

g) *Prepare a forest zoning plan for the forest areas adjacent to the property to protect it from negative impacts resulting from unsustainable forest exploitation:*

No progress has been made so far. Recent reports about the granting of a forest concession to the east of the Reserve demonstrate the urgency of this measure.

h) *Legalize and scale up the pilot system put in place by ICCN to regulate and monitor immigration as well as traffic on the RN4 road:*

No progress has been made. The current control system, which was introduced as a pilot, is still in place but should be made official as soon as possible. This measure will be critical to mitigate the impact of the road now that its rehabilitation is completed.

i) *Take measures to reinforce and reinvigorate the guard force and to improve its efficiency:*

An intelligence team has been trained and put in place within the entire property and this has improved the efficiency of patrols.

Draft Decision: 32 COM 7A.8

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-08/32.COM/7A,
2. Recalling Decision **31 COM 7A.8**, adopted at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007),
3. Notes with concern the preliminary results of the inventory, showing substantial reductions in the population of flagship species, including elephants and okapis, thus adversely impacting the outstanding universal value of the property;
4. Welcomes the progress achieved in regaining management control over the property and in addressing poaching and small-scale mining in the property;
5. Requests the State Party, in consultation with ICCN, to continue to implement the corrective measures adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 30th session (Vilnius 2006);
6. Regrets that the environmental management plan developed for the rehabilitation of the RN4 road crossing the property is not addressing the long-term impacts on the integrity of the property and that an important increase in illegal exploitation of forest products in the vicinity of the Reserve, in particular timber and bush meat has already been reported;
7. Urges the State Party to develop an additional environmental management plan for the RN4 to address the long term impacts, in particular to control increased immigration into the property and increasing wild meat trade and to provide three printed and electronic copies of it, as soon as it is ready, for review by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies;
8. Reiterates its request to revoke any mining concessions that might have been granted in the property;
9. Also requests the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre / IUCN mission to the property after the high-level meeting is held in Kinshasa to assess its state of conservation and progress in the implementation of the corrective measures in view of establishing the Desired state of conservation for a removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger, update the corrective measures required and set a timeframe for their implementation;
10. Also reiterates its request to the State Party, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, to develop a draft Statement of outstanding universal value including the conditions of integrity and a proposal for the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 33rd session in 2009;
11. Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2009**, a detailed report on the state of conservation of the property and progress in the implementation of the corrective measures as well as the requested additional environmental management plan for the RN4, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 33rd session in 2009;
12. Decides to continue to apply the Reinforced monitoring mechanism to the property;

13. **Also decides to retain Okapi Wildlife Reserve (Democratic Republic of the Congo) on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**

9. Simien National Park (Ethiopia) (N 9)

See Document *WHC-08/32.COM/7A.Add*

10. Air and Ténéré Natural Reserves (Niger) (N 573)

See Document *WHC-08/32.COM/7A.Add*

11. Niokolo-Koba National Park (Senegal) (N 253)

See Document *WHC-08/32.COM/7A.Add*

1. Okapi Wildlife Reserve (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (N 718)

Decision: 32 COM 7A.8

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document *WHC-08/32.COM/7A*,
2. Recalling Decision **31 COM 7A.8**, adopted at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007),
3. Notes with concern the preliminary results of the inventory, showing substantial reductions in the population of flagship species, including elephants and okapis, thus significantly impacting the Outstanding Universal Value of the property;
4. Welcomes the progress achieved in regaining management control over the property and in addressing poaching and small-scale mining in the property;
5. Requests the State Party, in consultation with ICCN, to continue to implement the corrective measures adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 30th session (Vilnius 2006);
6. Regrets that the environmental management plan developed for the rehabilitation of the RN4 road crossing the property is not addressing the long-term impacts on the integrity of the property and expresses its concern about the increase in illegal exploitation of forest products in the vicinity of the Reserve, in particular timber and bush meat has already been reported;
7. Urges the State Party to develop an additional environmental management plan for the RN4 to address the long term impacts, in particular to control increased immigration into the property and increasing wild meat trade and to provide three printed and electronic copies of it, as soon as it is ready, for review by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies;
8. Reiterates its request to revoke any mining concessions that might have been granted in the property;
9. Also requests the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre / IUCN mission to the property after the high-level meeting is held in Kinshasa to assess its state of conservation and progress in the implementation of the corrective measures in view of establishing the Desired state of conservation for a removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger, update the corrective measures required and set a timeframe for their implementation;
10. Also reiterates its request to the State Party, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, to develop a draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value including the conditions of integrity and a proposal for

the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 33rd session in 2009;

11. Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2009**, a detailed report on the state of conservation of the property and progress in the implementation of the corrective measures as well as the requested additional environmental management plan for the RN4, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 33rd session in 2009;
12. Decides to continue to apply the Reinforced Monitoring mechanism to the property;
13. Also decides to retain **Okapi Wildlife Reserve (Democratic Republic of the Congo) on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**