

Decision : 40 COM 7B.92

Białowieża Forest (Belarus / Poland) (N 33ter)

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/16/40.COM/7B.Add,
2. Recalling Decision **38 COM 8B.12**, adopted at its 38th session (Doha, 2014),
3. Notes with concern the recent amendments to the Forest Management Plan for the Białowieża Forest District in Poland which would provide for a threefold increase in fellings, including in mature stands, and the recently adopted "Programme for the Białowieża Forest as a UNESCO Natural Heritage and a Natura 2000 site", which would allow active habitat restoration interventions in two thirds of the area of each of the three Forest districts in Poland within the property which could result in disturbance of natural ecological processes;
4. Welcomes the State Party's invitation of an IUCN Advisory mission in June 2016, to provide recommendations regarding how the recent amendments to the Forest Management Plan relate to the requirements for protection of the property's Outstanding Universal Value;
5. Recalls that the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property emphasizes its undisturbed natural processes and the consequent richness in dead wood, standing and on the ground, which leads to a high diversity of fungi and saproxylic invertebrates;
6. Requests the State Party of Poland to submit to the Committee an evaluation of potential impacts on the amendments to the Forest Management Plan on the OUV of the property, taking into account all forms of conservation applicable to the site and the positions and options of local communities and stakeholders, in the context of the sustainable development of the Białowieża Forest region;
7. Takes note of the conclusions of the IUCN Advisory Mission and underlines the need for the State Party to consider the conclusions with all relevant stakeholders;
8. Also requests the State Party of Poland to take any necessary measures to maintain the continuity and integrity of protected old-growth forest in Białowieża Forest and to ensure that no commercial timber extraction is permitted within the entirety of the Polish part of the property and considers that such commercial timber extraction would represent a potential danger to the property in accordance with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*;
9. Notes that a transboundary Steering Committee for the property has been established which will be tasked with the preparation of a transboundary Management Plan for the property, and reiterates its request to the States Parties of Belarus and Poland to prepare such a plan as a matter of priority in order to ensure a coordinated approach to the management of the property and to guarantee that no actions can be allowed within the entire property that could negatively impact on its OUV;
10. Further requests the States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2017**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 41st session in 2017.