

Decision : 41 COM 7B.1

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

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/17/41.COM/7B.Add,
2. Recalling Decision **40 COM 7B.92**, adopted at its 40th session (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016),
3. Welcomes the decision by the State Party of Belarus to increase the strict protection zone of the Belarussian part of the property;
4. Notes the information provided by the States Parties regarding the activities termed sanitary cuttings undertaken in the Polish part of the property and the conclusions of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Amendment to the Forest Management Plan for the Białowieża Forest District but, noting that the separate evaluation of potential impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property mainly summarized the conclusions of the SEA, considers that the focus of the SEA on assessing potential impacts to the Natura 2000 site “Puszcza Białowieska”, does not represent an adequate assessment of impacts on the OUV of the property;
5. Reiterates its position that commercial timber extraction within the entire property would represent a potential danger to the property in accordance with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*, and notes with utmost concern the infringement decision issued by the European Commission in relation to Białowieża Forest in Poland, which noted that increased logging is likely to adversely affect the conservation of the site's habitats and species as well as cause irreparable biodiversity loss, including through removal of 100-year and older trees, and that these measures would, according to the evidence available, exceed those that would be necessary for ensuring the safe use of the forest;
6. Reiterates its request to the State Party of Poland to maintain the continuity and integrity of protected old-growth forest in Białowieża Forest and strongly urges it to immediately halt all logging and wood extraction in old-growth forests, and to clarify third party reports about logging targeting species other than those affected by bark beetle, which cannot be justified as so-called sanitary cuttings;
7. Requests the States Parties to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property to evaluate current and potential impacts of ongoing and planned forest management operations on the OUV of the property and to assess whether the property meets the criteria for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger;
8. While also noting the conclusion of the States Parties that the preparation of the Transboundary Management Plan for the property will require several years, also reiterates its request to the States Parties 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;
9. Also requests the States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2018**, 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 43rd session in 2019 , **with a view to considering in case of confirmation of ascertained or**

potential danger to Outstanding Universal Value, the possible inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger.