

Decision : 43 COM 7B.14

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

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/19/43.COM/7B,
2. Recalling Decision [41 COM 7B.1](#), adopted at its 41st session (Krakow, 2017),
3. Taking note of the conclusions of the 2018 joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission, commends the State Party of Belarus for successfully focusing the management of its part of the property on maintaining natural ecological processes, and on the restoration of wetlands, including Ramsar-designated areas;
4. Expresses its utmost concern about the widespread logging activities in the Polish part of the property between 2016 and 2018, including in the partially protected zone II comprising old-growth forest, and regrets the impacts that such practices have had on the ecological and natural processes in the property, resulting in negative impacts on its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);
5. Welcomes the decision by the State Party of Poland to suspend these logging activities since the beginning of 2018, and urges the State Party of Poland to ensure that all forest operations in the property comply with the following management prescriptions in line with the 2014 Nomination and as recommended by the 2018 mission:
 1. In the strictly protection zone as well as in the partial protection zone I and II, ensure that no forest management interventions are undertaken, including removal of deadwood, sanitary cuttings or any active regeneration activities (including soil preparation and tree planting),
 2. In the active protection zone, limit forest management activities exclusively to interventions directly aiming at speeding up the process of tree stand replacement to a more natural broadleaved oak – hornbeam forest or at preserving certain associated non-forest habitats, including wet meadows, river valleys and other wetlands and habitats of endangered plants, animals and fungi. The necessary active protection measures should be detailed in the Integrated Management Plan,
 3. In the entire property, restrict safety cuttings only to areas along specific roads and paths (at a 50 m-distance from each side) on the basis of a clear risk evaluation plan,
 4. For the entire property, develop and implement a comprehensive Forest Fire Prevention and Suppression Plan based on a rigorous risk assessment, to be included in the Integrated Management Plan;
6. Considers that non-compliance of the forestry operations in the property with the above would constitute a clear case of ascertained danger to the property, in line with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*, and warrant inscribing the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger;
7. Requests the State Party of Poland to revoke the amendment of the Forest Management Plan (FMP) for the Białowieża Forest District and ensure that any new FMP for areas within the property are based on the new overall Management Plan of the Polish part of the property;

8. Also considers that the existing FMPs should not be amended, or only in a very restrictive way allow for strictly necessary safety measures and on the basis of a clear risk evaluation plan and that any amendment should be sent to the World Heritage Centre with a clear justification, for review by IUCN, before approval;
9. Reiterates its request to the State Party of Poland to develop, as a matter of priority, an overall Management Plan (MP) for its part of the property, which places the protection of the property's OUV as its central objective, also taking into account the recommendations of the 2018 mission and to submit a draft of the overall MP to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN before its final approval;
10. Also requests the States Parties of Belarus and Poland to expedite the preparation of a Transboundary Integrated Management Plan, defining the overall management vision for the property based on the Statement of OUV, and setting out the transboundary governance system, as recommended by the 2018 mission;
11. Further requests the State Party of Belarus to strengthen the legal status and precedence of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park MP, making it obligatory for all other relevant MPs, such as the forest MP and the wildlife MP, to be aligned with it;
12. Also welcomes the moratorium on wolf hunting in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park (Belarus), and requests furthermore the State Party of Belarus to legally prohibit wolf hunting in the national park, in order to allow the population to continue its recovery;
13. Notes with concern that the upgrading of the Narewowska road by the State Party of Poland could potentially affect the ecological connectivity in the property, and requests moreover the State Party of Poland to suspend any upgrading works on the road pending completion and submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which specifically assesses the impacts of the road improvement on the OUV of the property, in line with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*;
14. Finally requests the States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2020**, an updated joint report on the state of conservation of the property, on the implementation of the above and of the recommendations by the 2018 mission, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 44th session in 2020.