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## World Heritage 44 COM

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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND  
NATURAL HERITAGE

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE Extended forty-fourth session

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Item 7A of the Provisional Agenda: State of conservation of the properties inscribed  
on the List of World Heritage in Danger

### 51. Selous Game Reserve (United Republic of Tanzania) (N 199bis)

*Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 1982*

*Criteria (ix)(x)*

*Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger 2014-present*

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

2014: Poaching and the ensuing dramatic declines in elephant populations, and the effects thereof on the ecosystem. In 2018 the impacts of the proposed Stiegler's Gorge hydropower dam (referred in the latest State Party report as the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project (JNHPP)) were added to the justification for Danger Listing.

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

A draft DSOCR was developed but not finalized before the justification for Danger listing was amended to include the impacts of the JNHPP.

*Corrective measures identified*

A draft action plan with corrective measures was developed but not submitted by the State Party before the justification for Danger listing was amended to include the impacts of the JNHPP.

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*Timeframe for the implementation of the corrective measures*

Not yet identified

*Previous Committee Decisions* see page <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/199/documents/>

*International Assistance*

Requests approved: 3 (from 1984-1999)

Total amount approved: USD 67,980

For details, see page <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/199/assistance/>

*UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds*

N/A

*Previous monitoring missions*

June 2007, November 2008 and December 2013: Joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring missions. February 2017: IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission

*Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports*

- Significant decline of wildlife populations due to poaching
- Insufficient funding and interruption of the retention scheme
- Management challenges of trophy hunting
- Changes in legislation in 2009 permitting hydrocarbon and uranium prospecting and extraction

inside game reserves

- Excision of land from the property to accommodate a uranium mine

- Operationalizing the uranium mining project and consideration of in situ leaching by the developer
- Lack of disaster preparedness and water monitoring related to the uranium mine
- Inadequate tourism management and development
- Decision to construct and subsequent construction of the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project

(JNHPP) and its associated infrastructure without adequate impact assessment

- Logging within the reservoir area
- Proposed Kidunda Dam development without adequate impact assessment
- Other potential infrastructure developments Need for buffer zone
- Need for increased involvement of local communities
- Alien invasive species

*Illustrative material* see page <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/199/> *Current conservation issues*

On 30 January 2020, the State Party submitted a report on the state of conservation of the property, available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/199/documents/>, with the following information:

- The State Party recalled its prior notifications at the time of inscription in 1982 and in 2016 that it intends to pursue the development of the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project (JNHPP), formerly known as the Rufiji Hydropower Project (RHPP);
- The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the JNHPP will be revised to take into account the independent reviews commissioned by IUCN;
- The vegetation (Miombo woodland) of the future dam's reservoir area, which is expected to cover a maximum surface area of 125,000 ha, will be cleared. According to the State Party this will result in minor disturbances to the ecological processes and wilderness values but will not significantly impact the ecosystem;
- The State Party did not invite the Reactive Monitoring mission requested by the Committee in its Decision **42 COM 7A.56** (2018) pending "logistical arrangements";
- The proposed Kidunda Dam will inundate 400 to 600 ha of the property. The EIA is under revision;
- Consultation continues for studies on the hydrological regime and a specific assessment of

potential downstream impacts on the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Kito-1

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proposed within the Kilombero Valley Ramsar site adjacent to the property;

- Poaching in and around the property has been controlled but the results of the 2018 aerial wildlife survey are not yet available.

In response to the World Heritage Centre's letter of 6 August 2019, the State Party confirmed on 9 August 2019 its decision to split the property into two protected areas (Nyerere National Park and Selous Game Reserve), noting that further details will be provided at a later stage. No information has been provided on this issue from the State Party since 2019.

Following receipt of the revised SEA of the JNHPP on 21 May 2019, IUCN commissioned an independent technical review of the SEA (available at <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/48718>), which was sent to the State Party on 14 November 2019.

In February 2020, the State Party released the official 2018 wildlife census report. Although the report was not transmitted to the World Heritage Centre, it is publicly available on the website of the Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI) (see <http://tawiri.or.tz/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Selous-Mikumi-2018-Final.pdf>).

The World Heritage Centre sent letters on 23 September 2019 and 15 January 2020, which reiterated the repeated request of the Committee to the State Party to invite the Reactive Monitoring mission to assess the impacts of the on-going major construction of JNHPP. On 6 February 2020, the State Party responded it was still not ready to invite the mission as it needed more time to finalize the revisions of the EIA and the SEA of the JNHPP and to set the boundaries of the proposed new protected areas replacing the earlier Selous Game Reserve, as inscribed on the World Heritage List. On 20 April 2020, the State Party sent a further letter to the Director-General of UNESCO, submitting a document entitled "Correct record and information on JNHPP in Tanzania", which provides historic background on the project and reasserts the information included in the State Party report that the hydropower project was mentioned at the time of inscription. No further updates were provided by the State Party on the advancement of the work on the JNHPP since then. At the time of writing of the report, the State Party has still not invited the Reactive monitoring mission.

#### *Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN*

Selous Game Reserve was inscribed on the World Heritage List under criteria (ix) and (x) for its large wilderness, including relatively undisturbed ecological and biological processes, including the globally significant Miombo forest habitat, the dynamic river ecosystem of the Rufiji River, and the presence of globally significant populations of wildlife, especially large mammals including elephant and black rhino.

In 2014, the Committee inscribed the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger due to the dramatic decline in elephant population as a result of intense poaching. In

2018, the Committee added to the justification for the Danger List, the tendering of large-scale logging rights inside the property for JNHPP (formerly RHPP).

It is of the utmost concern that public statements by Government officials quoted in the press report that works on the JNHPP have reached 48% completion (as of 15 April 2021) and will be fully completed by 2022. This current situation is despite the Committee's repeated expressions of utmost concern regarding the likely irreversible damage of JNHPP on the OUV of the property, and its request to the State Party to halt all activities (Decision **43 COM 7A.16**), as well as the Committee's unequivocally established position that the construction of dams with large reservoirs within the boundaries of properties is incompatible with their World Heritage status (Decision **40 COM 7**). Furthermore, it is also done despite the State Party's own commitment to not undertake any development activities in the property without the Committee's approval (Decision **36 COM 8B.43**).

JNHPP will involve the construction of a 130 m-high dam on the Rufiji River, a reservoir 12.5 km wide and 100 km long, inundating an area of 125,000 ha; a power plant; transmission lines; workers camp and access roads and transmission infrastructure inside the property. Publicly available information, including promotional video footages by the Government-owned Tanzania Electric Supply Company Limited (TANESCO) and associated construction companies confirm the advancement of the large-scale construction work inside the property (videos available at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRx6a284MB4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pf2Ifutfnu0>). These sources explicitly demonstrate the completion of a 703 m long river diversion tunnel, construction of river closure coffer dams, the diversion of the river from its natural riverbed and the on-going work on the elevation of the dam wall. The basis for the main

State of conservation of the properties WHC/21/[44.COM/7A.Add](#), p. 65 inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger and dam has been excavated and four saddle dams of a total length of 18.2 km are under construction. Roads and bridges have been installed. Crushing and batching plants, camps, offices and worker villages have also been constructed, creating an industrial area in the middle of the property. The area where the powerhouse is being constructed has been excavated with explosives and heavy equipment. Available time series of satellite images also clearly show the extent of the construction site and the massive alterations in the natural vegetation and landscape that have already taken place. The above-mentioned documentation by TANESCO reports that the main dam wall construction is expected to be finalized by November 2021, at which time the filling of the reservoir will start. From the available data, it seems clear that the project has reached a very advanced stage, which would now be extremely difficult to reverse.

It is important to stress that the impact of JNHPP on the Rufiji River, Tanzania's largest river, will far exceed the physical footprint of the project. Decades of well-documented evidence from comparable large-scale dam projects indicates the clear likelihood of substantial hydrological, morphological, chemical, biological, ecological and limnological

changes across the entire downstream floodplain over enormous distances all the way to the Rufiji River delta.

The independent technical reviews of the EIA and SEA of JNHPP, commissioned by IUCN, concluded significant technical and procedural shortfalls. The proposal by the State Party to revise the assessments to take into consideration the findings of the independent reviews now serves no apparent purpose, as the EIA/SEA can no longer inform decision-making at this advanced stage of the development.

The State Party has not provided further information to the World Heritage Centre and has not invited the overdue Reactive Monitoring mission. Had this mission been implemented after it was initially requested in 2018 (Decision **42 COM 7A.56**), it may have provided an opportunity for a first-hand assessment of these impacts and an in-depth dialogue before the project became irreversible. Based on the above mentioned information including past missions to the property, the World Heritage Centre and IUCN conclude that there is no doubt that the values that provide the basis of recognition under criterion (ix) have already been irreversibly damaged, and that the integrity of the property has been lost. Large-scale deforestation and the removal of vegetation has already taken place, and more loss is foreseen as soon as the filling of the reservoir starts. With the river diversion in place, the river system has now been altered and once the dam is in place this is anticipated to result in many downstream impacts beyond the physical footprint of the dam project. The downstream floodplain ecosystem, which sustained the world-famous aggregations of wildlife in the northern part of the property, will be irreversibly altered. The dam will alter the seasonal variation in the river flow and will affect water chemistry, turbidity, sediment loads, temperature and the complex interface with all riparian systems. Moreover, much more infrastructure will be needed to complete the project, including roads and transmission lines. JNHPP has therefore irreversibly affected the exceptionally intact character of the property and the intact ecological and biological processes of the Rufiji River that are a central basis of its OUV. Additional planned and existing projects such as the Mkuju uranium mine, the Kidunda Dam, the Kito-1 oil and gas exploration project, planned road projects, potential additional uranium and other mining projects for which prospection and mining licenses have been attributed inside the property as well as overlapping oil exploration blocks will further affect the ecological integrity of the property and the larger Selous ecosystem.

The exceptional biodiversity values which justified criterion (x) have already been severely affected by poaching. The results of the recently published 2018 aerial survey show that while the catastrophic decline appears to have been halted, elephant populations have unexpectedly not started recovering, strongly indicating that poaching has likely remained a problem. The population of black rhino, estimated at more than 2,000 at the time of inscription, is likely to be extinct or no longer viable. If there are remaining individuals, they have likely survived in the dense woodlands, including those which will be flooded by the dam. The creation of the large reservoir area, the loss of a large area of dense forest vegetation and the permanent alterations to the floodplain system will all have significant impacts on the biodiversity and wildlife populations, already heavily impacted by poaching over the last decade.

It is therefore concluded that irreversible damage to the OUV of the property has already been caused through the loss of values and integrity under criterion (ix), and there continues to be significant threat to the remaining values under criterion (x), which is anticipated to be further impacted as a result of JNHPP. Consequently, in view of the permanent loss of the attributes that are the basis of the OUV of the property, the conditions for deleting the property from the World Heritage List, in accordance with Paragraph 192 of the Operational Guidelines, are now met. **It is therefore recommended that the Committee delete the Selous Game Reserve from the World Heritage List.**

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In the State Party document entitled “Correct record and information on JNHPP in Tanzania”, the State Party incorrectly states that the World Heritage Centre did not respond to the State Party’s notification on its decision to move ahead with JNHPP on 5 July 2017. The World Heritage Centre’s reply on 8 August 2017 recalled Decision **41 COM 7A.17**, in which the World Heritage Committee “*strongly urge[d] the State Party to conduct a comprehensive ESIA/HIA for this project before deciding to proceed with the construction of the project and submit [the ESIA/HIA] to the World Heritage Centre for review*”. The correspondence that ensued is recorded in the 2018 and 2019 reports to the World Heritage Committee (Documents WHC/18/[42.COM/7A.Add](#) and WHC/19/[43.COM/7A.Add.2](#)). The document of 20 April 2020 also recalls historical information including from the time of inscription, but does not take account of the Committee’s utmost concerns raised over the recent decade regarding the JNHPP, based on a series of assessments and detailed reviews that are all included in the record of the Committee’s decisions. Furthermore, the JNHPP was added to the justification for the continued inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

The World Heritage Centre and IUCN note that there remains important biodiversity in the wider ecosystem including the Selous-Niassa Ecosystem. It would therefore be appropriate that the State Party, in consultation with IUCN and the World Heritage Centre and possibly with other States Parties where relevant, could consider the evaluation of these remaining areas with significant biodiversity and assess if these areas could potentially be nominated as a new property on the World Heritage List.

#### **Draft Decision: 44 COM 7A.51**

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/21/[44.COM/7A.Add](#),*
2. *Recalling Decisions **31 COM 7B.3, 32 COM 7B.3, 33 COM 7B.8, 34 COM 7B.3, 35 COM 7B.6, 36 COM 8B.43, 37 COM 7B 7, 38 COM 7B.95, 39 COM 7A.14, 40 COM 7A.47, 41 COM 7A.17, 42 COM 7A.56 and 43 COM 7A.16**, adopted at its 31st (Christchurch, 2007), 32nd (Quebec City, 2008), 33rd (Seville, 2009), 34th (Brasilia, 2010), 35th (UNESCO, 2011), 36th (Saint-Petersburg, 2012), 37th (Phnom Penh, 2013), 38th (Doha, 2014), 39th (Bonn, 2015), 40th (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016), 41st (Krakow, 2017), 42nd (Manama, 2018) and 43rd (Baku, 2019) sessions respectively,*
3. *Also recalling that States Parties have the obligation under the Convention to protect and conserve the World Cultural and Natural Heritage situated on their territory, notably, to ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection and conservation of such heritage,*

4. *Further recalling the Committee's clear position, adopted in its Decision **40 COM 7**, that the construction of dams with large reservoirs within the boundaries of World Heritage properties is incompatible with their World Heritage status,*
5. *Recalling furthermore that the property was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger due to the dramatic decline in elephant population due to poaching, and the tendering of large-scale logging rights within the property for the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project (JNHPP) (formerly the Rufiji Hydropower Project),*
6. *Recalling moreover the commitment made by the State Party that led to the adoption of Decision **36 COM 8B.43**, to not undertake any development activities in the property without the Committee's approval,*
7. *Notes the additional planned and existing projects such as the Mkuju uranium mine, the Kidunda Dam, the Kito-1 oil and gas exploration project, planned road projects, potential additional uranium and other mining projects for which prospection and mining licenses have been attributed inside the property as well as overlapping oil exploration blocks,*

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*hich will further affect the ecological integrity of the property and the larger Selous ecosystem;*

8. *Deeply regrets that the State Party has not halted the JNHPP inside the property, for which construction is well underway, resulting in a loss on integrity and irreversible damage to the values which underpin the Outstanding Universal Value as it was inscribed on the World Heritage List;*
9. *Also deeply regrets that the State Party has not fulfilled its obligations defined in the Convention, in particular the obligation to protect and conserve the Outstanding Universal Value, as inscribed, of the World Heritage property of the Selous Game Reserve;*
10. **Decides to delete Selous Game Reserve (United Republic of Tanzania) from the World Heritage List.**