

Decision: 43 COM 7B.13 of the World Heritage Committee about “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” from the 43 session in Baku - 2019

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/19/43.COM/7B,
2. Recalling Decisions 41 COM 8B.7 and 42 COM 7B.71, adopted at its 41st (Krakow, 2017) and 42nd (Manama, 2018) sessions respectively,
3. Welcomes the discussions currently underway to ensure funding availability for coordination activities and to improve connectivity within and between component clusters and across the property;
4. Also welcomes the decision of the State Party of Slovenia to designate the two forest reserves containing its components of the property as nature reserves in order to strengthen their legal protection regime;
5. Noting the measures developed by the State Party of Belgium to address the Committee’s request to consider the future enlargement of components to at least the established minimum size of 50 ha, requests it to continue its efforts in this regard to fully address the Committee’s request;
6. Notes with appreciation the willingness of the States Parties to develop joint guidelines for buffer zone design and management and the progress achieved to date, but expresses concern that no progress has been made on clear guidelines regarding acceptable logging activities within the established buffer zones and reiterates the importance of good buffer zone design and effectiveness as the only feasible way to protect the integrity of the small forest remnants included in this property;
7. Considering that Decision 41 COM 8B.7 requested all States Parties of this property to give special emphasis to appropriate buffer zone management in order to support undisturbed natural processes, urges the States Parties to define a clear and strict approach to buffer zone design and management which will allow for the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property and to seek further guidance from the World Heritage Centre and IUCN on this issue;
8. Regrets that the State Party of Albania did not provide any update regarding the state of conservation of its components through the joint report submitted by the States Parties, and also requests it to provide a response to the letters from the World Heritage Centre, especially regarding third party information about illegal logging in the buffer zone of one of the Albanian components;
9. Also notes with concern the information provided by the State Party of Romania, which shows that logging operations undertaken in the buffer zones of the Romanian components of the property took place in areas close or adjacent to the boundaries of the components and reiterates its request, extending it to all States Parties, to ensure that logging is, and remains, strictly prohibited within the property, and that no logging operations are allowed in the buffer zones of the property if they could negatively impact natural processes and the property’s OUV;
10. Further requests the States Parties of Albania and Romania to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the Albanian and Romanian components of the property, respectively, and all States Parties of this transnational property to provide, prior to this mission, an overview about the management regime of their respective buffer zones and the management operations, which took place since inscription, in order to assess whether activities in the buffer zones of the property might have negative impacts on its OUV;

11. Also noting the intention of the State Party of Slovakia to submit a proposal for significant boundary modification of its components by February 2020, also urges it to ensure that the recommendations of the 2018 Advisory mission are fully taken into account in the preparation of the final proposal and reiterates its position that, due to the continued lack of adequate legal protection of the Slovak components of the property, their protection from logging and other potential threats cannot be guaranteed in the long term, which would clearly constitute a potential danger to the OUV of this serial transnational property as a whole, in line with Paragraphs 137 and 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*;
12. Further noting the proposed corrections of the boundaries of two Croatian components and their buffer zone, requests furthermore the State Party of Croatia to provide more detailed information on this potential boundary modification to the World Heritage Centre and IUCN for future follow-up through the appropriate procedures;
13. Finally requests the States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2020**, 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 44th session in 2020.