

The 4th International NGO Forum on World Heritage at Risk

Villa Decius, Krakow, 30 June - 1 July 2017

Resolution

On the Preservation of the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region

Civil Society Organizations having attended the 4th International NGO Forum on World Heritage at Risk, organized by World Heritage Watch on 30 June – 01 July 2017 in Krakow, appeal to the members of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC) at its 41st Session with the following concerns:

Despite the legal protection bestowed upon the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region, (the former Yugoslav) Republic of Macedonia, under the World Heritage Convention as a World Heritage Property (1980), as part of the Prespa-Ohrid Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (2014), and under the Republic's legal framework for conservation as Galichica National Park (NP) (IUCN Category II), and despite the efforts of NGOs and citizens' initiatives, it is with great concern we note that the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property is under significant threat from large-scale urbanization and development projects proposed by the central and local Governments.

Facing the need to protect the unique patrimonial value of the Lake Ohrid area, we urgently call upon:

- The State party to utterly commit to the protection of the inscribed property and implement the decisions of the WHC and, in doing so, comply with the World Heritage Convention and international and national legislation;
- UNESCO/WHCommittee to **strongly appeal** to the State Party for strict implementation of WHCommittee Decisions;
- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), in the spirit of its own Environmental and Social Policy, to immediately cancel all intended funds for the A3 express highway Ohrid-Peshtani section, whose potential to accelerate damaging urbanization within the World Heritage Site has already been acknowledged by an existing Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Specifically, we strongly encourage the WHC to demand that the State Party of Macedonia:

- Prepares **Environmental and Heritage Impact Assessments** and a **Cumulative Impact Assessment** preceding all development proposals that can potentially impact on the OUV of the property, and submits these documents along with all project proposals, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, to the WHC for review prior to granting approval for implementation;

- Proceeds with a calculation, to be executed by an independent international expert body prior to any development planning, of the **human population carrying capacity** of the Lake Ohrid catchment area and Galichica NP;
- Enacts a **moratorium** on all large-scale urban and infrastructure development in the property, including the A3 express highway in its entirety (Kosel-Ohrid-Peshtani-Border with R. Albania) and instead, in alignment with the "EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020", pursues a more farsighted goal: ecosystems and their services to be maintained and enhanced by establishing **green infrastructure** while **restoring** at least 15% of degraded habitats.

Furthermore, we urge the WHC to request that the State party of (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:

- Urgently implements an improved **integral sewage water collection system** and solid waste treatment facility for all of the Ohrid region in order to decrease pollution levels and avoid imminent eutrophication of the lake;
- Implements and enforces the revised **General management plan**;
- Establishes **Core Conservation Areas** (CCA) of highest conservation priority, and Coastal Zone Management of designated **buffer zones** for the CCAs;
- Inaugurates a **Commission** as an independent coordinative and advisory management body comprised of international scientific experts, heritage specialists, the NGO sector, ecologists, protected property owners, local community leaders, tourist workers, as well as representatives from the local and central government in order to avoid corruption and harmful, biased decision-making in the future.

We acknowledge that the status of inscribed WH Property of the Ohrid region is crucial for its future, significantly contributing to the preservation and safe-guarding of the site and its outstanding universal value.

Krakow, 1 July 2017