



The 5th International NGO Forum on World Heritage at Risk

Ramada City Center Hotel, Manama, 22 - 23 June 2018

We, the Civil Society Organizations who have attended the 5th International NGO Forum on World Heritage at Risk organized by World Heritage Watch on 22-23 June 2018 in Bahrain, coming from 24 countries in 6 continents, as active and concerned citizens dealing with Natural and Cultural World Heritage properties at different places, would like to bring the following to the attention of the World Heritage Committee:

Resolution

On threats to Lake Turkana (Kenya) and the lower valley of the Omo River (Ethiopia)

The following comments and recommendations are submitted regarding draft decisions 42 COM 7B.44 and 42 COM 7B.92 in Item 7B of the Provisional Agenda, on the State of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List, to the 42nd session of the World Heritage Committee on Lake Turkana and The Lower Omo Valley, in Kenya and Ethiopia, respectively.

1. Having read draft decision 42 COM 7B.92, in the draft resolutions of WHC/18/42.COM/7B, Paris of 14 May 2018, the World Heritage Committee (WHC) is commended on its proposal to inscribe Lake Turkana (Kenya) as a World Heritage property in danger. The WHC is urged to adopt this decision and the state party of Kenya must afford high-level protection to Lake Turkana.
2. In the same vein, it is necessary to bring to your attention the proposed Gibe IV and V hydropower dams to be constructed downstream of the Gibe III, and the negative consequences of this cascade of dams on the Lower Valley of the Omo and Lake Turkana. The two properties are already experiencing low water levels due to the Gibe III dam. Development of Gibe IV and V will aggravate the impacts.
3. There is grave concern about the lack of implementation of previous decisions (i.e 36 COM 7B.3, 39 COM 7B.4 and 40 COM 7B.80) taken by World Heritage Committee in past sessions. The requirement to carry out a comprehensive Strategic Environmental Assessment before any further developments on the Omo River was not followed, and the recommendation to halt development was not implemented; rather, the states parties proceeded to complete construction of Gibe III. There is fear that draft decision 42 COM 7B.44 is likely to face the same fate.
4. Noting that the states parties have already previously been afforded time to abide with the WHC decisions stated in 3 above, it is recommended that draft decision 42

COM 7B.44 should be scaled to provide stronger protections, and that the Lower Valley of the Omo be inscribed as a property in danger.

5. The WHC is further urged to explore ways of encouraging and endorsing legal personality for rivers and lakes in Africa, especially those that form part of World Heritage sites. This will provide bottom-up best practices in dealing with World Heritage properties, through the active involvement of communities in the legal personality process. More so, this process will award legal rights to rivers and lakes through legal precedent and national legislation of state parties, by recognizing the representation of rivers and lakes in court processes and negotiations. This approach will uphold and promote, enhanced methods of protection of World Heritage sites affected by water infrastructure.

6. And lastly, the WHC must request, and require an increased burden of transparency and accountability on all the plans related to the Gibe IV, and Gibe V, dams built on the Omo River. The WHC must also require that no further dams should be built on the river, especially in consideration of the devastating effects on Lake Turkana recognized by the WHC in Item 7B of the Provisional Agenda, on the State of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List, WHC/18/42.COM/7B, Paris of 14 May 2018.

Manama, 23 June 2018