EUROPE / NORTH AMERICA

PIRIN NATIONAL PARK

BULGARIA



WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION - IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

PIRIN NATIONAL PARK (BULGARIA) - ID Nº 225 bis rev

Background note: Pirin National Park, was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1983 under criteria (vii), (viii) and (ix), at that time numbered natural criteria (i), (ii) and (iii). The original IUCN evaluation noted the mountain scenery, glacial geomorphology, and the continuing evolution of the flora, as evidenced by a number of endemic and relict species, as key features of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. The proposed extension of Pirin National Park has been nominated under criteria (vii), (ix) and (x).

In line with previous recommendations by the World Heritage Committee and IUCN, the State Party submitted both a proposal for the extension of the existing property in 2006, in which it also proposed to exclude the Bansko and Dobrinishte tourism zones from the property and to include them in a new buffer zone. This proposal was incomplete and therefore not evaluated by IUCN. A revised proposal submitted in 2007 was evaluated by IUCN but withdrawn by the State Party before its examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 32nd session of the (Quebec City, Canada, 2008). A further revised proposal, in which the State Party again proposes to exclude the Bansko and Dobrinishte tourism zones from the property and to include them in a new buffer zone, was submitted in 2009 and is the subject of this evaluation.

Since 2002, the property has been the subject of repeated concern by the World Heritage Committee regarding threats to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property from the development of ski facilities in the Bansko and Dobrinishte tourism zones (see Decisions 26COM 21B.2, 27COM 7B.15, 28COM 15B.21, 29COM 7B.23, 31COM 7B.27 and 33COM 7B.21). Two joint World Heritage Centre / IUCN monitoring missions were carried out in 2002 and 2004, one IUCN evaluation mission in 2007, and the Committee noted in 2002 and 2009 the possible inclusion of the property in the List of World Heritage in Danger.

1. DOCUMENTATION

i) **Date nomination received by IUCN**: 16th March 2009

ii) **Additional information officially requested from and provided by the State Party**: No additional information was requested from or provided by the State Party.

iii) **UNEP-WCMC Data Sheet**: Last updated in August 2007, sourced from original nomination document and nomination for extension, as well as additional references. To be updated in line with Committee decision.

iv) **Additional literature consulted**: Burmester, A. et al. (2005) **World Natural Heritage and Cultural Landscapes in Europe**. Report of the Workshop at the International Academy for Nature Conservation, Isle of Vilm, Germany, 18-21 June 2005. German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, Bonn.; Grunewald, K., Monget, J.-M. and Brown, D. (2009) **Characterisation of contemporary local climate change in the mountains of southwest Bulgaria**. Climatic Change 95: 535-549.; IUCN (2008) **IUCN Technical Evaluation of the Proposed Extension of Pirin National Park.** IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.; Milne, R. and Heiss, G. (2002) **Report of the International Mission to Pirin National Park, Bulgaria**, 11-16 February 2002. UNESCO, Paris.; Ministry of the Environment and Water (2004) **Pirin National Park Management Plan** 2004-2013. Ministry of the Environment and Water, Sofia.; Rössler, M. and Zupancic-Vicar, M. (2004) **Report on the UNESCO-IUCN Mission to Bulgaria**, 3-6 February 2004. UNESCO, Paris.; Save Pirin NGO Coalition (2006) **Bansko Ski Zone – Crime against: UNESCO Site, Potential Natura 2000 Site**. Save Pirin NGO Coalition, Sofia.; Strid, A. (1980) **Flora of Mount Olympus**. Goulandris Museum of Natural History, Athens. Thorsell, J. and Hamilton, L. (2002) **A Global Overview of Mountain Protected Areas on the World Heritage List**. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.; Thorsell, J. and Sigaty, T. (1997) **A Global Overview of Forest Protected Areas on the World Heritage List**. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.; WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme (2008) **White Elephants in the Green Mountains: Ski Developments in Bulgaria**. WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme, Vienna, Austria.

v) **Consultations**: Eleven external reviewers. Extensive consultations were undertaken during the field visit with the Deputy Minister of Environment and Water; representatives of the National Nature Protection Service Directorate in the Ministry of Environment and Water; the Director and other staff of Pirin National Park; scientists, representatives of private sector, community and NGO interests, and the Bulgarian National Commission for UNESCO.

vi) **Field visit**: Marija Zupancic-Vicar and Bastian Bomhard, October 2009.

vii) **Date of IUCN approval of this report**: 22nd April 2010.

2. SUMMARY OF NATURAL VALUES

The existing World Heritage property covers an area of 27,442.9 ha in the Pirin Mountains, southwest Bulgaria, and includes mostly the lower altitude, forested parts of the 40,356 ha Pirin National Park. It comprises diverse limestone mountain landscapes with some 70 glacial lakes and other glacial landforms, waterfalls, caves and predominantly coniferous forests, including significant stands of Bosnian pine (*Pinus heldreichii*) and Macedonian pine (*P. peuce*), two Balkan endemics. The property includes a range of endemic and relict species representative of the Balkan Pleistocene flora.

The dominant part of the proposed extension is high mountain territory over 2,000 m altitude, covered mostly by alpine meadows, rocky screes and summits. The flora of Pirin National Park includes 1,315 species of vascular plants, about one third of Bulgaria's flora, including 86 Balkan endemics, 17 Bulgarian endemics and 18 local endemics, found mainly on the rock and meadow communities of the sup-alpine and alpine zone in the proposed extension. The flora of lichen (367 species) and mosses (329 species) represents about half of the total lichen and moss flora in Bulgaria. The flora also includes 165 species of algae and 375 species of fungi. The fauna of Pirin National Park includes 45 mammal species and 159 bird species. Pirin is also home to eight species of amphibians, eleven species of reptiles and six fish species. The inventory of invertebrates is far from being completed: 3,400 species have been recorded up to now. There are no figures available for the species values of the proposed extension relative to the existing property; however, due to the altitudinal difference between the two, the proposed extension certainly adds high altitude species to the existing property and also improves the habitat connectivity within the property for a number of other species. Some of the peripheral parts of the proposed extension, in particular above the town of Bansko, include former pastures and plantations, which are currently undergoing a process of natural succession.

The property is located in a region which has been the subject of rapid tourism development, notably in relation to the construction of the Bansko ski resort within the existing property, but not in the proposed extension. This resort development has had a significant impact on the values and integrity of the property, with particular damage done to the pine forests above the town of Bansko.

The State Party now proposes to extend the existing World Heritage property to include the whole of Pirin National Park except for two designated tourism zones whose values and integrity is no longer compatible with World Heritage status as detailed in Section 4 of this report and illustrated on Maps 1 and 2. More information on the boundary changes and integrity issues is provided in Section 4 of this report.

3. COMPARISONS WITH OTHER AREAS

The existing World Heritage property was inscribed on the World Heritage List under criteria (vii), (viii) and (ix) because of its mountain scenery, glacial geomorphology, and the continuing evolution of the flora, as evidenced by a number of endemic and relict species. The proposed extension would strengthen the values, integrity and management of the existing property under these criteria and thereby contribute to the long term conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. However, as the extended property has also been nominated under the additional criterion (x), it is necessary to compare the values of Pirin National Park for biodiversity and threatened species with other comparable World Heritage properties and protected areas in the region and globally.

Pirin National Park is part of the biogeographical province of the Balkan Highlands. Other World Heritage properties in the region include Plitvice Lakes National Park (Croatia) and Durmitor National Park (Montenegro). Plitvice Lakes National Park is mainly a forest area which was inscribed for its outstanding travertine formations. Durmitor National Park is a high mountain area like Pirin and includes the Tara Gorge and pine forests. Other comparable mountain areas in the region include the following: Sutjeska National Park (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Rila National Park (Bulgaria); Galičica National Park and Pelister National Park (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia); Mount

Olympus Mountain and Mount Tymphi (Greece); Sara National Park (Serbia); and the planned Prokletje National Park (Montenegro).

In terms of biodiversity and threatened species, the values of Pirin National Park are comparable to a number of these other areas in the region. For example, Mount Olympus (Greece) has 1,700 vascular plant species (23 endemics) and Montenegro's planned Prokletje National Park 1,609 (20 endemics), compared to 1,315 (18 endemics) for Pirin National Park. The floral and faunal diversity of Pirin National Park, although important at the national level, does therefore not stand out when compared with other mountain areas in the region.

At the global level, Pirin National Park ranks far lower in terms of biodiversity and threatened species when compared with many mountain areas. It is much smaller and features far less species and habitats than other mountain World Heritage properties such as the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks (Canada), Western Caucasus, Golden Mountains of Altai and Central Sikhote-Alin (Russian Federation), and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (USA).

4. INTEGRITY

4.1 Protection

The existing World Heritage property, with the exception of the four small areas on the periphery of the property that have been excluded from Pirin National Park in 1987 and 1999, and proposed extension are State-owned and designated as a national park under Bulgarian Law. This status provides a legal basis for the protection of the values and integrity of the property, however, the development of the Bansko ski resort within the national park, which has significantly damaged the values and integrity of the property, calls into question the effectiveness of the protection status of the existing property and proposed extension.

IUCN considers the protection status of the proposed extension meets, in theory, the requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines. However, in practice, the effectiveness of the protection status is questionable and will very much depend on the political will of the State Party to ensure its effectiveness.

4.2 Boundaries

The boundaries of the existing World Heritage property do not follow an ecological rational and create a highly fragmented property with a low level of integrity. The proposed extension of 12,136.02 ha (see Table 1 and Map 1) will significantly enhance the integrity of the property by connecting currently isolated areas to form a single ecological unit based on the current boundaries of Pirin National Park.

In line with previous recommendations by UNESCO and IUCN, the State Party also proposes to exclude from the World Heritage property the Bansko and Dobrinishte tourism zones (comprising 1078.28 ha in total located within the national park) from the World Heritage property and include them in a new buffer zone (see Maps 1 and 2). These tourism zones include major infrastructure such as the main access road to the park, five hotels, large ski facilities (including cabin lifts, chair lifts and drag lifts) and ski runs, a biathlon centre for all-year use and artificial water reservoirs to make artificial snow, and are thus not compatible with World Heritage status.

The State Party also proposes to exclude from the World Heritage property four small areas (150.6 ha in total) on the periphery of the property that were excluded from the national park in 1987 and 1999 (see Map 1). These areas have limited values, and are no longer protected and managed as part of the national park, and are thus no longer compatible with World Heritage status.

The Park Directorate has marked clearly the boundaries of Pirin National Park above Bansko and in other critical areas. Further marking of other areas in the field is planned for the future, subject to available funding. The proposed exclusion of the Bansko and Dobrinishte tourism zones from the World Heritage property, if accepted, should be reflected in any maps and other information material concerning the World Heritage property. Such maps and other information material should also clearly show the limits of the area of existing ski facilities and ski runs, as well as other buildings and facilities, at the time of inscription of the proposed extension on the World Heritage List.

IUCN considers that the boundaries of the proposed extension meet the requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines as the area included would strengthen the integrity and management of the World Heritage property. IUCN also concurs with the other boundary changes proposed by the State Party.

4.3 Management

The management of Pirin National Park is under the responsibility of the National Nature Protection Service of the Ministry of the Environment and Water, which is responsible for the coordination and control of Bulgaria's protected areas. The Pirin National Park Directorate is responsible for the on-the- ground management of the national park and applies the government policy concerning the national park.

Table 1. Summary of the proposed boundary changes

	Property	Buffer zone
Area of existing property (ha)	27,442.9	0
Area of proposed extension (ha)	+12,136.02	0
Area of proposed exclusions on the periphery of the property (ha)	-150.6	0
Area of proposed exclusion of the Bansko and Dobrinishte tourism zones and their proposed inclusion in a new buffer zone (ha)	-1078.28	+1078.28
Total area (ha)	**39,277.72**	**1078.28**

Note: minor discrepancies in these figures are due to more accurate area measurements in the nominated extension.

The Pirin National Park Administration employs some 50 staff. This includes five chief inspectors, or senior rangers, for each of the park's management regions as well as some 30 rangers. All staff and administration costs of Pirin National Park are funded by the State budget. The level of this funding has remained relatively constant in recent years. According to the State Party, Bulgarian Leva (BGN) 517,278 (roughly USD 350,000) has been approved for 2009, which is lower than in 2006-2008 but higher than in 2004-2005. The main source of funding for the implementation of conservation measures in Pirin National Park is the State Enterprise for Management of Environmental Protection Activities (SEMEPA) established by Bulgaria's Environmental Protection Act. The level of SEMEPA funding has fluctuated significantly in recent years: it dropped from BGN 706,600 (roughly USD 482,000) in 2004 to 87,100 (roughly USD 59,000) in 2007. However, according to the State Party, BGN 745,690 has been approved for 2009. IUCN notes that the effective management of the property will continue to depend on the allocation of adequate funds.

Since 2004 Pirin National Park is managed according to a management plan approved by Decision #646 of the Council of Ministers. The management plan was developed for the period 2004-2013 and designates six zones with different objectives within the national park:

- **Reserve zone** (IUCN Category Ia; 14.8% of the park's territory): This zone includes the strictly protected Yulen and Bayuvi Doupki-Dzhindzhiritza Reserves. Human activities are limited to scientific research and passing of people along marked trails only;

- **Zone of limited human impact** (Ib; 20.3%): Human activities are limited to scientific research and hiking along marked trails only;

- **Zone for conservation of forest ecosystems and recreation** (IIa; 45.2%): Permitted activities include hiking and recreation, angling, collecting mushrooms, herbs and fruits for personal use, passing of domestic animals on defined trails, maintenance and restoration activities in the forests and regulating the numbers of certain animal species;

- **Zone for sustainable use of open areas and recreation** (IUCN Category IIb; 16.9%): Permitted activities include all of the above plus grazing of sheep, cattle and horses. This zone is mainly reserved for traditional grazing activities;

- **Tourism zone** (IUCN Category III; 2.2%): This zone is proposed to be excluded from the park and to be included in a new buffer zone. Permitted activities include all of the above plus sports such as skiing, horse-back riding and cycling along defined trails, and climbing and caving in defined areas. According to the management plan, no construction of any buildings and facilities is permitted in this zone;

- **Zone of buildings and facilities** (IUCN Category IV; 0.6%): This zone includes the buildings and facilities of the Bansko and Dobrinishte ski resorts and is proposed to be excluded from the park and to be included in a new buffer zone. The management plan permitted the construction of the Bansko ski resort according to the adopted Territorial Arrangement Plan and its Environmental Impact Assessment of 2000. According to the management plan, no construction of any buildings and facilities is permitted in the national park outside this zone. For the purpose of readability, the tourism zone and zone of buildings and facilities are referred to in this report jointly as "Bansko and Dobrinishte tourism zones".

The implementation of the management plan was reviewed in 2008; however, no changes to the management plan were approved. The process to develop the new management plan for the period post 2013 is planned to commence in 2010. In order to assure the protection and conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, it will be essential for the State Party to ensure that the new management plan does not permit further ski development or construction of other ecologically

unsustainable facilities within the property and its buffer zone, nor extension of the tourism zone into the property. In the past, the influence of the responsible authorities on the development of the Bansko ski resort appears to have been limited, given the repeated unauthorized modifications and violations of approved requirements within the existing property (see also Section 4.4 below).

IUCN considers the management plan of Pirin National Park, which covers the proposed extension, meets the requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines and will strengthen the management of the World Heritage property. IUCN considers it, however, imperative that the responsible authorities exert effective control over Pirin National Park to prevent any developments that would further damage the values and integrity of the property (see also Section 5.1 below).

4.4 Threats and human use

The World Heritage property has long been subject to tourism pressure, largely caused by the development of ski facilities and ski runs. Small ski areas were developed at Bansko, Dobrinishte and Kulinoto in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1999, the World Heritage Centre was informed by the State Party about plans to develop a major ski resort above Bansko, and in 2001 the State Party issued a concession for the construction of the Bansko ski resort to Ulen Company. The main phase of construction of the Bansko ski resort took place from 2002 to 2004; however, further work on ski facilities and ski runs continues to date, with an upgrade of the Bansko biathlon centre for all-year use underway during the IUCN field visit in October 2009. IUCN also notes that night skiing, off-piste skiing and heliskiing are all being advertised and practised in the Bansko ski resort according to its marketing materials; however, at present it is unclear to what extent these activities affect the values and integrity of the property.

The construction of the required ski facilities and ski runs in the park's zone of buildings and facilities, which has not affected the proposed extension, was authorized through the Territorial Arrangement Plan (TAP) and its Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of 2000, and the park's management plan adopted in 2004. However, a number of unauthorized modifications and violations of the TAP and EIA requirements have occurred. These have not only damaged or disturbed the areas inside the zone of buildings and facilities and tourism zone of the property, but also affected areas of the property outside these zones. In October 2009, following NGO submissions concerning developments in the Bansko ski resort, which is part of the proposed Natura 2000 site Pirin, the Directorate-General for the Environment of the European Commission started an infringement procedure. It is expected that the State Party will submit its response to the NGO submissions in due course. IUCN considers that the State Party should also submit its response to the World Heritage Centre when it is prepared.

Bansko has become one of the most rapidly developing towns in Bulgaria. A number of hotels and holiday resorts were constructed literally on the park boundary. The capacity of the current Bansko ski resort is insufficient in relation to the number of tourists that can be accommodated in the hotels and holiday resorts of Bansko. Hence there are plans by the municipality of Bansko and Ulen Company to expand the Bansko ski resort. Current sketch maps of the resort still show, for example, a closed ski lift and ski run outside both the tourism zone and zone of buildings and facilities (see Map 3). Plans to re-open this ski lift and ski run are not compatible with the management plan and should not be permitted. Other municipalities around the park have plans to develop new ski resorts and/or expand the existing Dobrinishte and Kulinoto ski areas. One such plan is for a new ski resort of three times the size of the Bansko ski resort and would also affect the proposed extension. None of these plans are in line with the current management plan of the park and/or have been approved by the responsible Ministry for Environment and Water. In a meeting during the IUCN field visit, the Deputy Minister for Environment and Water in fact asserted that no further ski developments in the park would be approved. However, tourism development within and around the property has not been effectively controlled in the past, and it remains to be seen if the State Party is able to protect the values and integrity of the extended property against further tourism pressure.

In the view of IUCN, the Bansko ski resort (see Photo 1) cannot be considered a sustainable use of an existing World Heritage property as per paragraph 119 of the Operational Guidelines, and is therefore not in line with the conservation objective of the World Heritage Convention. The development of the Bansko ski resort has made it necessary to exclude the Bansko tourism zone from the World Heritage property and to include it in a new buffer zone. In order to maintain the values and integrity of the World Heritage property it will be critical to ensure that no further ski development or construction of other facilities takes place within the property and its buffer zone, and that the tourism zone is not extended into the property. It will also be critical to ensure that the existing ski facilities and ski runs comply with the requirements of the TAP, EIA and management plan, including those for the recultivation of degraded areas. Any further tourism development in Pirin National Park should be ecologically sustainable and utilize the yet under-realized potential of the property to develop more environmentally friendly forms of tourism.
Other threats to the property that need to be

monitored and managed include illegal logging, hunting and grazing. While illegal logging seems to be currently under control in both the property and proposed extension, illegal hunting (mostly of chamois) is reported to occur occasionally and needs to be controlled. Grazing is permitted in zones IIb, III and IV of the park and low intensity grazing in these zones is considered to be ecologically sustainable; however, the extent and intensity of grazing needs to be controlled continuously in order to prevent overgrazing.

During the IUCN field visit it was noted that the park's walking trails are well managed and maintained, and that relevant park information and regulations are posted at all major trailheads and entry points. However, activities such as skiing, horse-back riding and cycling, or the use of snow mobiles and quad bikes, will have to be closely monitored and managed, and existing regulations enforced.

IUCN considers that the area of the proposed extension, which has not been affected by the ski developments, meets the conditions of integrity as set out in the Operational Guidelines and will strengthen the integrity of the World Heritage property. IUCN considers it, however, imperative that the responsible authorities examine the impact of activities such as night skiing, off-piste skiing and heliskiing, and the use of snow mobiles and quad bikes, and exert effective control over Pirin National Park to prevent any activities and use that would damage the values and integrity of the property.

Given the continuing and rising pressure on the property, IUCN considers it important that a joint UNESCO / IUCN monitoring mission visits the property in 2011 to assess the state of conservation of the property, with particular reference to its effective protection from inappropriate development and human use within and beyond its boundaries, and to review a draft of the new management plan.

5. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

5.1 Values and integrity of the existing World Heritage property

IUCN considers that the values and integrity of the property have been repeatedly and significantly compromised by the development of ski facilities, to the extent that the property could be considered for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger. After careful consideration, extending the property, removing the compromised areas from the property, and minimising or mitigating the adverse effects provides a means to redress this particular situation. However, IUCN considers that the World Heritage Committee should make it entirely clear that further ski development or extension of the tourism zones that compromise the values and integrity of the property is incompatible with its World Heritage status and would result in the inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger. IUCN is also of the view that further damage to the property from ski development could eventually result in the deletion of the property from the World Heritage List.

IUCN notes that its recommendations in this report apply to the particular circumstances of the Pirin National Park World Heritage property and do not represent an appropriate model or precedent for other World Heritage properties facing development pressure. While a case by case consideration seems necessary there should be generic guidance for major development of sporting facilities affecting World Heritage properties.

5.2 Use of the World Heritage Emblem

In line with the Operational Guidelines and taking into account possible future changes currently being discussed, the State Party should take all possible measures to prevent the inappropriate use of the World Heritage Emblem, such as its use in marketing materials for the Bansko ski resort.

6. APPLICATION OF CRITERIA

The extended property has been nominated under criteria (vii), (ix) and (x), although the existing World Heritage property was inscribed under criteria (vii), (viii) and (ix). IUCN considers that the proposed extension should be approved under the original criteria, in order to strengthen the integrity and management of the property in relation to these criteria, but that the extended property does not meet criterion (x) based on the following assessment:

Criterion (x): Biodiversity and threatened species

The importance of Pirin National Park for the *in situ* conservation of biological diversity and threatened species is not significant at the global level. Its values are typical of several mountain ranges within the Balkan Peninsula. Similar species and habitats are found in a number of other protected areas of the Balkan Highlands. The floral and faunal diversity of Pirin National Park, although important at the national level, does not stand out when compared with other mountain areas in the region. At the global level, Pirin National Park ranks far lower in terms of biodiversity and threatened species when compared with many mountain areas. It is much smaller and features far less species and habitats than a number of other mountain World Heritage properties.

IUCN considers that the extended property does not meet this criterion.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

IUCN recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopt the following decision:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents **WHC-10/34.COM/8B** and **WHC-10/34.COM/INF 8B2**;

2. Recalling Decision **33 COM 7B.21**, adopted at its 33rd session (Seville, 2009);

3. Approves the extension of the P**irin National Park, Bulgaria**, inscribed under criteria (vii), (viii) and (ix), in order to strengthen the integrity and management of the World Heritage property;

4. Adopts the following **Statement of Outstanding Universal Value**:

Brief synthesis

The World Heritage property covers an area of around 40,000 ha in the Pirin Mountains, southwest Bulgaria, and overlaps with the undeveloped areas of Pirin National Park. The diverse limestone mountain landscapes of the property include over 70 glacial lakes and a range of glacial landforms, with many waterfalls, rocky screes and caves. Forests are dominated by conifers, and the higher areas harbour alpine meadows below the summits. The property includes a range of endemic and relict species that are representative of the Balkan Pleistocene flora.

Criteria

Criterion (vii): *The mountain scenery of Pirin National Park is of exceptional beauty. The high mountain peaks and crags contrast with meadows, rivers and waterfalls and provide the opportunity to experience the aesthetics of a Balkan mountain landscape. The ability to experience remoteness and naturalness is an important attribute of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.*

Criterion (viii): *The principal earth science values of the property relate to its glacial geomorphology, demonstrated through a range of features including cirques, deep valleys and over 70 glacial lakes. The mountains of the property show a variety of forms and have been developed in several different rock types. Functioning natural processes allow for study of the continued evolution of the landforms of the property, and help to understand other upland areas in the region.*

Criterion (ix): *The property is a good example of the continuing evolution of flora, as evidenced by a number of endemic and relict species, and the property also protects an example of a functioning ecosystem that is representative of the important natural ecosystems of the Balkan uplands. Pirin's natural coniferous forests include Macedonian Pine and Bosnian Pine, with many old growth trees. In total, there are 1,315 species of vascular plants, about one third of Bulgaria's flora, including 86 Balkan endemics, 17 Bulgarian endemics and 18 local endemics. The fauna of Pirin National Park includes 45 mammal species, including brown bear, wolf and pine marten, and 159 bird species. Pirin is also home to eight species of amphibians, eleven species of reptiles and six fish species. Although the forests are affected by some historical use, the natural functioning of the ecosystem ensures the protection of its regionally significant biodiversity values.*

Integrity

The original inscription of the property in 1983 proved to be inadequate in representing and maintaining the Outstanding Universal Value of Pirin, but an extension in 2010 has addressed the issues to the best possible degree and represents the minimum area of Pirin National Park that can be considered to correspond to the requirements of Outstanding Universal Value set out in the World Heritage Convention.

The National Park is clearly defined from the point of view of its mountainous nature and ecology, and the boundaries of the property are of sufficient size to capture the natural values of Pirin. Adequate boundaries have been established through the extension of the initially inscribed property, to include the most remote areas of the interior of the National Park, and exclude adjacent areas that are not compatible with World Heritage status due to impacts on integrity from ski development. The values of the property as extended retain the attributes of a natural landscape but they closely adjoin areas subject to intensive tourism development that are a risk to the integrity of the property.

Management and protection requirements

The property is covered by national legislation which should ensure strong national protection of the values of the

property, including the prevention of encroachment from adjoining development. It is essential that this legislation is rigorously enforced and is respected by all levels of government that have responsibilities in the area. The property also has an effective and functioning management plan, provided its implementation can be ensured through adequate resources to both maintain the necessary staffing levels and undertake the necessary management activities to protect and manage the property. A system of regular monitoring of the natural values of Pirin and ongoing programmes to maintain habitats and landforms in their natural state, avoid disturbance and other impacts on wildlife, and to preserve the aesthetic values of the property are required.

The World Heritage property has long been subject to tourism pressure, largely caused by the development of ski facilities and ski runs. Small ski areas were developed at Bansko, Dobrinishte and Kulinoto in the 1980s and 1990s. Activities such as night skiing, off-piste skiing and heliskiing are activities which may affect the values and integrity of the property and require rigorous control. Bansko, adjoining the property, has become one of the most rapidly developing towns in Bulgaria with hotels and holiday resorts constructed literally on the park boundary. Tourism development within and around the property has not been effectively controlled in the past including some areas that were developed within the property and caused significant damage. The management plan for the property needs to ensure a long-term priority for the protection of the natural values of Pirin, and to guard against any encroachments and impacts within the property from skiing, sporting events or other inappropriate development. Equally the planning documents that are created by national, regional and local authorities need to similarly ensure the protection of the natural values of the property, and also integrate the benefits it provides as a natural landscape to the surrounding area.

Other threats to the property include illegal logging, poaching and the use of snow mobiles and quad bikes. These uses require close monitoring, management and the enforcement of effective regulations. The management of visitor use to both prevent negative impacts and provide opportunities to experience the values of the property in a sustainable way is also an essential long term requirement for this property.

5. In the specific context of the above extension, accepts the proposal of the State Party to exclude from the property four small areas (150.6 ha in total) on the periphery of the property which have been excluded from the national park; and also accepts the proposal of the State Party to exclude from the property the Bansko and Dobrinishte tourism zones (1078.28 ha in total), and to include these latter areas, which are still within the national park, in a new buffer zone;

6. Regrets that the **Outstanding Universal Value** of the property has been repeatedly and significantly impacted by the development of ski facilities and ski runs, to the extent that the property may be considered for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, and that continued ski development is a critical threat to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property;

7. Requests the State Party to strictly ensure that no further ski development takes place within the property and its buffer zone, and to ensure that the existing ski facilities and ski runs comply with the approved requirements, including those for the restoration of degraded areas;

8. Decides that any further development of and severe impacts from ski facilities or ski runs, or associated infrastructure, within the property and its buffer zone would result in the inscription of the property on the **List of World Heritage in Danger**;

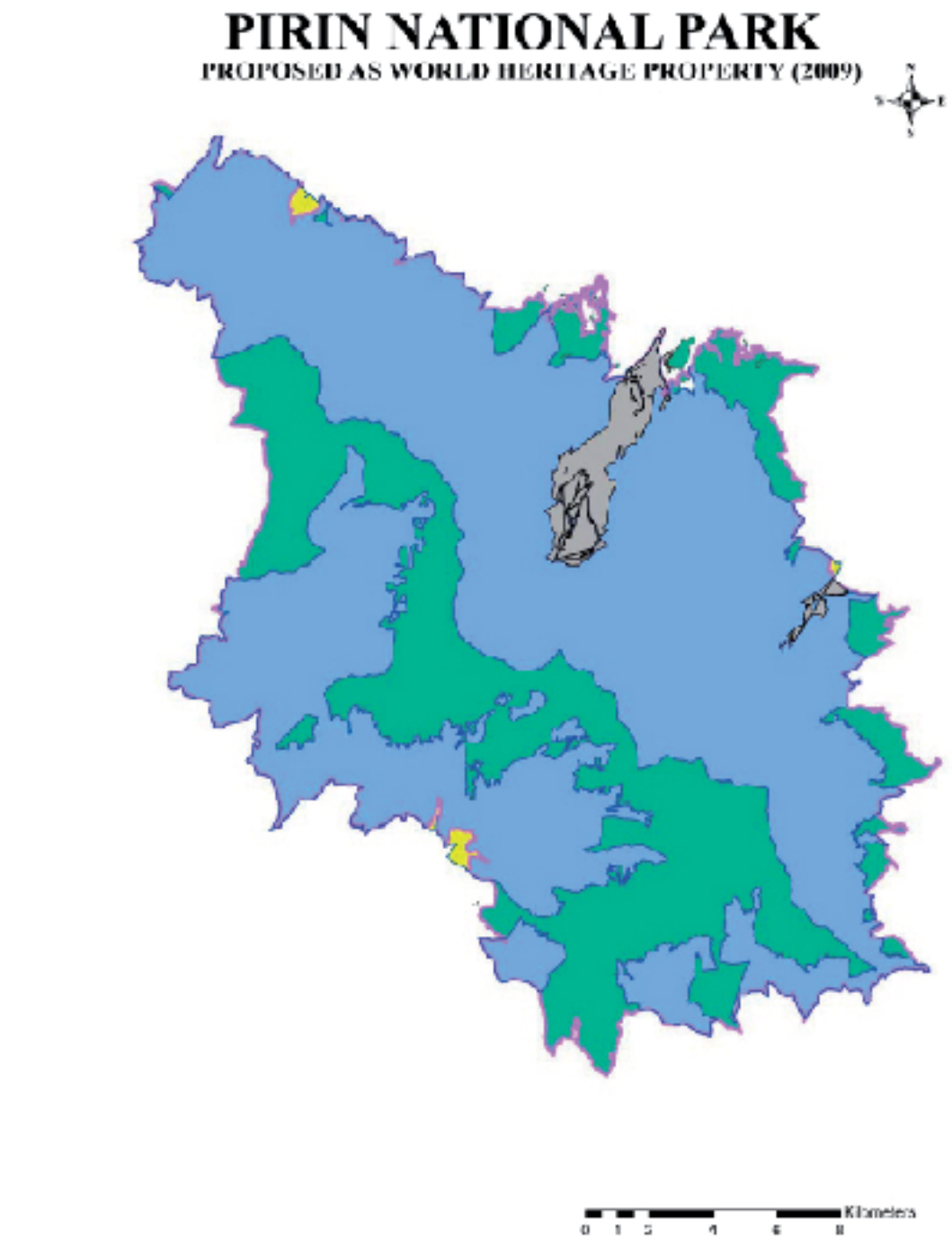
9. Urges the State Party to ensure that the new management plan to be developed for the period post 2013 will not permit further ski development or construction of other ecologically unsustainable facilities within the property and its buffer zone, nor extension of the tourism zone into the property;

10. Also urges the State Party to take all possible measures to prevent the inappropriate use of the World Heritage Emblem, including by not allowing its use in relation to the Bansko ski resort, which cannot be considered a sustainable use of a World Heritage property; and encourages the State Party to explore and enhance options for ecologically sustainable tourism in the property that will benefit local communities;

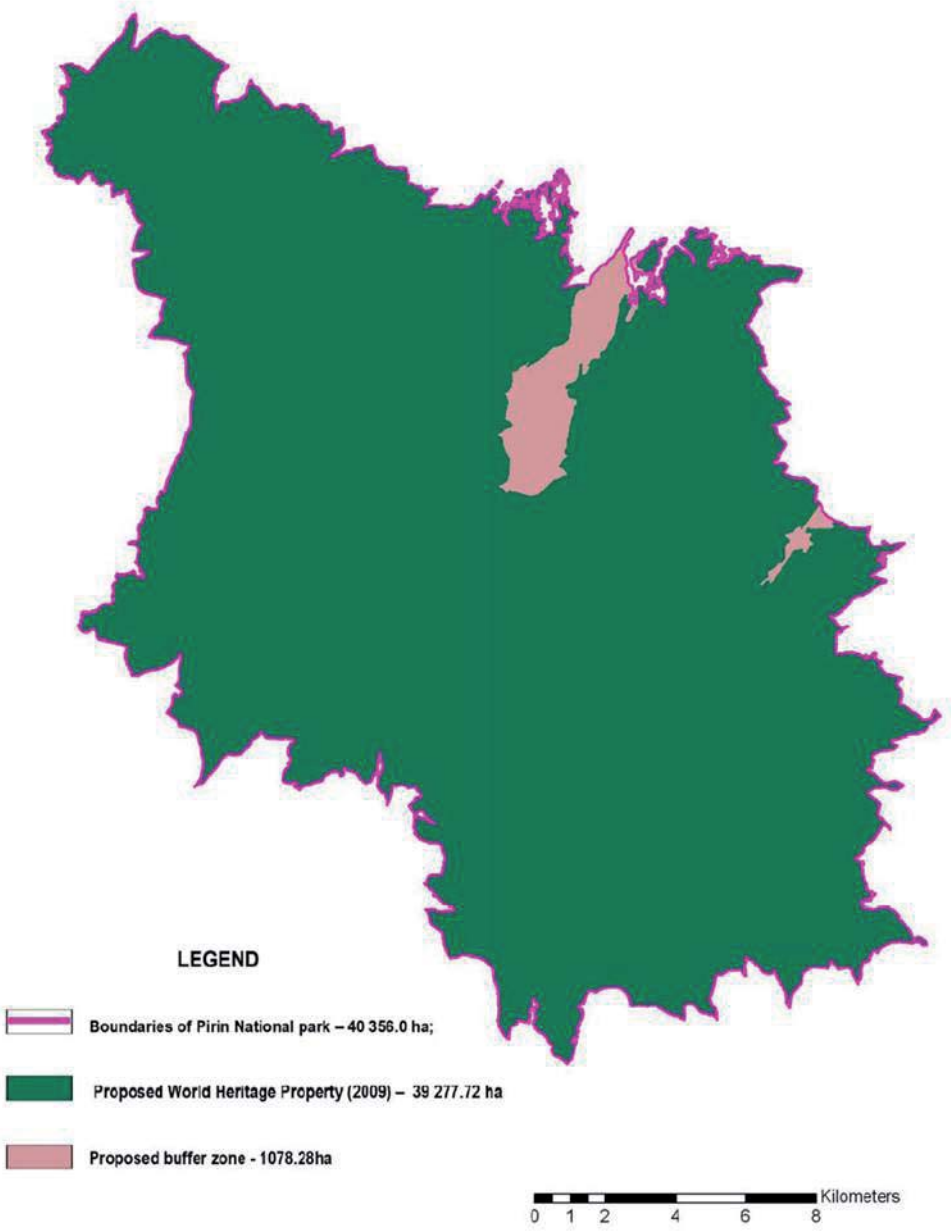
11. Requests the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN monitoring mission to the property in 2011 to assess the state of conservation of the property, with particular reference to its effective protection from inappropriate development and human use within and beyond its boundaries and to review a draft of the new management plan to ensure that it will provide for the continued protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property;

12. Also requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2011, a report on the state of conservation of the property, with particular reference to its effective protection from inappropriate development and human use within and beyond its boundaries, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 35th session in 2011. This report should include the State Party response to the NGO submissions that resulted in an infringement procedure by the Directorate-General for the Environment of the European Commission.

Map 1: Overview of the proposed boundary changes.



Map 2: Proposed boundaries of the World Heritage property and its buffer zones.



Map 3: Sketch map of the Bansko ski resort still showing the closed Ctzurna mogila ski lift and ski run to the right. This closed ski lift and ski run is outside both the tourism zone and zone of buildings and facilities, which are proposed for exclusion from the World Heritage property and inclusion in a new buffer zone, and will thus remain within the property. Plans to re-open this ski lift and ski run are against the management plant and should not be permitted. (Source of map: www.banskoski.com)



Photo 1: The higher part of the Bansko ski resort which was constructed within the existing World Heritage property. This part of Pirin National Park is proposed for exclusion from the World Heritage property and inclusion in a new buffer zone. (Source of photo: www.banskoski.com)

