

IUCN CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWERS OF EARTH SCIENCE NOMINATIONS

The following checklist has been prepared to assist reviewers in providing focussed comments in relation to nominations of geological and geomorphological sites. Before carrying out their review, reviewers are asked to note the following key points in relation to the definition of 'outstanding universal value' (OUV):

1. The key question to be considered by the review is whether the nominated property can be regarded as being of OUV. This is the central concept of the World Heritage Convention and is defined in the Operational Guidelines to the Convention as follows:

Outstanding universal value means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole. The World Heritage Committee defines the criteria for the inscription of properties on the World Heritage List.

2. The Operational Guidelines also clearly note that:

The Convention is not intended to ensure the protection of all properties of great interest, importance or value, but only for a select list of the most outstanding of these from an international viewpoint. It is not to be assumed that a property of national and/or regional importance will automatically be inscribed on the World Heritage List.

3. The specific criterion which aims to interpret the concept for earth science sites is natural criterion (viii), which notes that sites should be:

"outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features."

4. OUV is thus the central concept of the Convention and it is of the utmost importance to the long-term integrity and credibility of the Convention that the level of OUV remains as high as possible. Reviewers are therefore strongly encouraged to be as rigorous as possible in considering whether the nominated property can be justified as meeting the requirements of OUV.

5. IUCN considers the following points are relevant in defining the meaning of OUV:

- **Outstanding:** For properties to be of OUV they should be exceptional. IUCN has noted in several expert meetings that: "the World Heritage Convention sets out to define the geography of the superlative – the most outstanding natural and cultural places on Earth". The aim of the Convention is clearly for a select list, not for representation of all types of sites or features. **Reviewers are therefore asked to assist in ensuring that sites nominated are fully justifiable as being globally outstanding, including in relation to other comparable sites.**
- **Universal:** The scope of the Convention is global in relation to the significance of the properties to be protected as well as its importance to all people of the world. By definition properties cannot be considered for OUV from a national or regional perspective. The fact that the aim is for universal importance (i.e. to all people of the world) also implies that the Convention is not the appropriate instrument for recognition of the many sites that are of international importance to the scientific community. Other means should be used for recognising such sites. **Reviewers are therefore asked to assist in ensuring that only sites with a genuine 'universal value' are recommended for inscription.**
- **Value:** What makes a property outstanding and universal is its "value" which implies clearly defining the worth of a property, ranking its importance based on clear and consistent standards, and assessing its quality. IUCN seeks to assess such values at a broad level that have a global relevance. It is important to try to avoid narrowly based claims which could create a precedent for the list to become a representative collection of specialised sites (rather than a select list of sites of outstanding universal value). Such an approach would see the credibility of the list eroded over

time. **Reviewers are therefore asked to comment on the breadth and importance of the values and to note when they consider cases are put forward on narrowly based values.**

IUCN kindly asks reviewers to submit their comments on whether the property meets the requirements of OUV in the context of the points above. Reviewers are asked to submit their comments either as a stand-alone statement, or where possible considering the following seven questions:

(1) How outstanding are the scientific values of the nominated property on a world scale? I.e. how international is the level of interest in the site?

(2) How unique is the nominated property in demonstrating the values that the nomination considers as being of OUV? Are there other places which display such values at a similar or greater level? (Please give an indication of the number of other places and specific examples where possible.)

(3) Is the nominated property the only or main location where major scientific advances were (or are being) made that have made a substantial contribution to the understanding of the values for which the property is nominated?

(4) What are the prospects for ongoing discoveries at the site, and what types of discoveries might be anticipated?

(5) How universal are the values of the nominated property? Does the site demonstrate values that are “*of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity*”, or are the values primarily of a more specialised interest to science? (Please explain the values that you consider to be those that are wider relevance and why you consider them to be so.)

(6) How readily can the values of the property be demonstrated to and comprehended by non-earth scientists?

(7) How broad or narrow are the values put forward for the nominated property? It is helpful where relevant to take a ‘taxonomic’ approach to distinguishing the values of the property. (As a simplistic example “the world’s most outstanding volcano” is a very broad value, “the world’s best example of a volcanic plug” is a narrow value). The key point is that the World Heritage List is not an appropriate vehicle to collect a large number of sites representing very specific values.

Reviewers should base their comments on the nomination file, their knowledge of the nominated property, and/or any additional information readily available to them. Please note that to avoid confusion in the IUCN evaluation process reviewers should however not contact the State Party or management of the nominated property for information. Such contact will be made by IUCN's field evaluators during the evaluation mission, or may be followed up by IUCN through letters if required.

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Name	
Organisation	
Postal address	
Email address	
Nationality	
Please note if you have had any direct or indirect input to the nomination of this property	YES/NO (Details)

REVIEWERS COMMENTS

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PILOT QUESTIONS ON OUV)

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