Final Report

5th Coordinating meeting supporting the preparation of the nomination dossier of the Hyrcanian Forests for inscription on UNESCO’s World Heritage List

21-26 October 2017
Gilan and Mazandaran
IR of Iran

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Autumn 2016
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5th Coordinating meeting supporting the preparation of the nomination dossier of the Hyrcanian Forests for inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List
21-26 October 2017
Fooman, Gilan, IR of Iran

Background

Pursuant to the four meetings held since January 2017 in support of the preparation of the nomination dossier for the inscription of the Iranian Hyrcanian Forests on UNESCO's World Heritage List, the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHHTO) organised a fifth meeting, in cooperation with the Michael Succow Foundation (MSS), the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO (Iran-NatCom), the Iranian Department of Environment (DoE) and the Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Management Organization (FRWO) of Iran.

Considering the work so far done, the nature of this fifth meeting differed from the other four meetings as it focused on examining the prepared chapters and editing them, finalising the maps of the component sites, and reaching a final conclusion about the selected component sites.

Day I
21 October 2017
17:00-21:30

Participants:
Hans Dieter Knapp, MSS
Mahin Gazani, Iran-NatCom, project coordinator
Seyyed Mohsen Hosseini, Person in charge of the project
Ali Ghomi Avili, ICHHTO
Fatemeh Ahmadi Kamali, MSS
Mehrnaz Pirouznik, Iran-NatCom, translator assistant of the project
Fariba Babaei, Project team
The Iranian and German group arrived in Fooman at 16:30 pm and the meeting kicked-off at 17:00.

The representative of MSS, Prof. Knapp, initiated the event with an introductory speech, welcoming all and explaining the history of his work on the Caspian forests. He expressed pleasure in seeing the related organizations (DoE, ICHHTO and FRWO) working together so closely, pursuing the nomination and hence inscription of the Hyrcanian forests. He then briefed the session on his six-hour ride from Tehran to Fooman, saying that "travelling in Iran is no less than reading a text book on geography". He introduced the Michael Succow Foundation's role in the process of nominating the Hyrcanian Forests as an advisory one. "Additionally, MSS is able to prepare a draft of the statement of OUV as well as the comparative analysis", said professor Knapp.

He then briefed the session on the decisions adopted by the four previous meetings, explaining that at the February meeting it was decided to base the nomination on criteria IX and X of the Operational Guidelines. "We decided it should be a serial site with several components in order to document the climatic gradient from West to East, the altitudinal gradient from sea level up to the mountains, and also in order to document the diversity of forest types and landscape complexities. A third meeting was held in June in Amol, followed by a meeting in Germany", he recalled.

Professor Knapp introduced the goal of this fifth meeting as finalising the selection of the component sites, working on the chapters so far prepared and field visits. A next step will be a final meeting in Tehran in November, he said. The professor expressed hope to have the dossier completed and submitted in the time-frame set according to the road map drawn-up at the January meeting.

Dr Hosseini then took the floor. He briefed the session on the objectives of this fifth meeting and explained what he had done so far.
He also questioned Professor Knapp about the possibility of including another three or four component sites to the ones already agreed upon, in order to better reveal the spirit of the forests. His reason for this proposal was the problem of data scarcity for some sites. However, Prof. Knapp gave advice not to remove already agreed-upon components because of low data base and explained that the high integrity of the sites should be involved and the list and maps of all components must be finalised as soon as possible. "When we have a site with high integrity and low data base we should not exclude it from the dossier", explained Prof. Knapp. What should be considered for the future is the possibility of a transnational extension by Azerbaijan.

The leopard and the brown bear were named as two distinctive features of the Caspian forests by the Professor regarding which he emphasised the need for having these features highlighted in the nomination dossier. "In the dossier we must focus and concentrate on the key aspects", said Prof. Knapp.

Regarding the chapters so far written by the project manager and his team, Professor Knapp had the following general remarks:

- The need to create a balance between the style and the content of the dossier.
- The need to shorten the dossier and to move detailed information to the appendices.

"The style is very good but it is too much. There are a lot of features and photos. The font should also be changed as well as the line spacing (font 12, line spacing 1.5). Delete some pictures and concentrate on the content and the message, to avoid an impression of imbalance between content and illustrations", explained Professor Knapp.

Comments on chapter 1:
- Short and distinct names and no abbreviations (eg. Golestan North and Golestan West instead of Golestan National Park (GNP));
- Fix tables according to the operational guidelines (include a column from table 2 to table 3 and delete table 3);
- Give two-digit numbers to the component sites instead of abbreviating their names;
- Add numbers in the maps instead of abbreviations;
- Give the size of the overall buffer in the relevant table for sites with more than one component.
- No need to define terms that are already known by IUCN;
- The need to explain that "this nomination will be a serial site because of … it consists of (no. of) component sites and explain the gradients and the diversity";
- The need for a paragraph explaining why we are doing what we are doing;
- The need for accurate information about the borders of protected areas and buffer zones;
- No need to repeat/double maps in the text (in addition to the overview maps);
- The necessity to outline the property border line in red and the borders of the buffer zone in blue, in all maps;
- The need to add explanations to the photos as well as references;
- The necessity to enlarge the core area of Kojoor component site, to save it from industrial use and interventions, and the importance of having this issue discussed in the coming days with Dr Moghaddasi (Deputy for FRWO). It was suggested to have the core zone of Kojoor enlarged towards the forests of khayroud-kenar (watershed No.: 45);
- The need to enlarge the buffer zone of Siahroudbar, to avoid exploitation (discuss this issue with Dr Moghaddasi of FRWO);

Additionally, the logos prepared for the Hyrcanian Forests were discussed and the professor outlined the main features of a logo in general and a world heritage site logo in particular, as simplicity, being to the point and conveying the message of the site.

Summary of the night:

Professor Knapp wrapped up the meeting by summarising the issues discussed.

"We discussed some technical questions. We need to add the information about the protected areas in the maps, to change some pictures to give an impression of the wild landscape. Repetitions of maps are not required since the information is already available in the overview map. We need to bring the names consistently with the table, the list, the map and the titles. We need to separate the maps and the text.

We have two problems, one with Kojoor. This is my urgent suggestion to enlarge the property and to include the slope forest. Two other smaller problems regarding the enlargement of the buffer zones of Gasht-e Roudkhan and Siahroudbar towards Masouleh", said professor Knapp.

At the end of the first night two videos of the proposed sites were played. Professor Knapp suggested that once the nomination is submitted it would be useful to use the movies to build a five- or six-minute promotion video for raising local, national and international (public) awareness.
Day II
22 October 2017
8:30 am – 21:30 pm

Participants:
Hans Dieter Knapp, MSS
Mahin Gazani, Iran-NatCom
Fatemeh Ahmadi Kamali, MSS
Seyed Mohsen Hosseini, Person in charge of the project
Fariba Babaei, Project team
Shaghayegh Zolghadri, Project team
Ali Ghomi Avili, ICHHTO
Rasoul Ashrafipour, FRWO
Ali Bali, DoE
Milad Rahimi, Project team
Yahya Kooch, Project team
Arash Afsar, ICHHTO
Mehrnaz Pirouznik, Iran-NatCom
Kamran Nasir Ahmadi, Project team (DoE)
(The scanned list of participants is attached)

The group set out for a visit of the Lisar Protected Area at 8:30 am and reached the site at 13:30.

The main task of the evening meeting of the second day, which began at 20:30 and ended at 21:30 was to consider the feasibility of including Lisar as a component site and whether this inclusion was decent.
The answer was yes, it would be important to include Lisar as a component site because it would represent the most northwestern part of the Hyrcanian forests. It would be possible to outline three forest stands as potential component parts.

A second task of this meeting was to discuss the third chapter of the nomination dossier.
The general comments to this chapter were that most parts of what written in chapter 3 must be moved to chapter 2 with a description of all component parts. The brief synthesis part will be chapter three and that should not be more than 5 to 7 pages. The brief synthesis is the last part, which will be written when we have the statement of OUV and the comparative analysis. Chapter three must be very short and distinctive.

Definition of component cluster and component part:
The patches will be referred to as component parts. In the case that two or three component parts are surrounded by a joint buffer zone what we would have would be a component cluster. An example was given of the way a title of a component cluster must be written (see below): Golestan (A+B) or Golestan (North+South). And the first sentence following the title should begin like this:
The component cluster includes the component parts A and B with a joint buffer zone and it is identical as the Golestan National Park.

The picture below shows a component part and a component cluster. Buffers are shown in red and orange.

The OUV was explained to be for all of the nominated sites, which should be written based on Criteria IX and X of the Operational Guidelines. This means that there is no need to write a separate OUV for each of the proposed component clusters/sites and that a single statement of OUV must be written for all the nominated sites as Hyrcanian Forests.
Day III
23 October 2017

On the third day of the meeting, the group travelled to the proposed component part of Siahroudbar. There they met specialists from the DoE and FRWO of Gilan province and Fooman (a Northern Iranian city in Gilan). The list of the names include:

1. Sarbazi (Mr), DoE, Gilan
2. Abdollahi (Mr), Deputy for FRWO, Gilan
3. Nikjoo (Mr), Programme Specialist, FRWO, Gilan
4. Sadeghi (Mr), Head of FRWO, Fooman

The group stopped at the road to the villages of Seedasht and Palangdareh\(^1\), where they enjoyed a picturesque view of the Dorfak (mountain) tops, the peak of a massive mountain range on the southern part of Siahroudbar. The component part showcased a diverse vegetation coverage. The characteristics of the component part are as follows:

1. Villages surrounded by cultural landscape with remnants of Cupresus forests;
2. Mixed forests managed in traditional style;
3. Beech forests in the middle of the mountain belt, old-growth closed stands partly used as pasture for sheep;
4. Upper mountain belt with normal open woodland ecotone; and
5. Alpine belt.

The visit of Siahroudbar was wrapped up with a walk in the Beech forests (1000-11000m a.s.l), with a pure stand of Oriental beech (Fagus orientalis) and a few old Hornbeam trees (Carpinus betulus) type.

This visit was followed by a hasty lunch and then a journey to the component part, Khoshk-e-daran, where the group reached at dusk and was not able to enter for a field visit. However, they visited the wildlife exhibition of the DoE and discussed the opportunity of using the exhibition as an information centre once the Hyrcanian Forests were inscribed as world heritage.

The visit of Khoshk-e-daran was thus postponed to the fourth day of the meeting, proceeding a visit of the component part, Kojoor forests (watersheds no 45 and 46), in Chalous, Mazandaran province.

\(^{1}\) The name Seedasht means “thirty plains” and the name Palangdareh means “Panther valley”.
Day IV
24 October 2017

The morning of the fourth day was allocated to a field visit of Kojoor component cluster. The group set out at 8:35 am and arrived at the site at 10:30. They met officials from the DoE and FRWO of Mazandaran province and together set off to visit the Kojoor forests (watersheds number 45 and 46). The names of the officials are as follows:

1. Hasan Sam (Mr), Programme Specialist, FRWO Mazandaran
2. Seyyed Reza Mousavi (Mr), Prgramme Specialist, FRWO Mazandaran
3. Alizadeh (Mr), Deputy for FRWO, Mazandaran
4. Javad Mo’meni (Mr), DoE, Mazandaran

After an introduction to the history of the nomination of the Hyrcanian Forests of Iran and the official initiation of the nomination project in January 2017, Professor Knapp briefed the experts about the necessity of enlarging the core zone of the Kojoor component, due to its rich diversity, existence of mixed forests and relic trees on the steep slopes of Kojoor that reach the lowland coast of the Caspian Sea. As a result, the officials from the FRWO and DoE of Mazandaran agreed to enlarge the core zone to include Chiller, Baharno and Minasang sections as well. A short stop in the woods wrapped up this visit. The MSS representatives were then taken for a visit of the botanical garden in Noshahr. The group returned to the hotel by 14:00 pm and after lunch left for a second visit of Khosk-e-daran component site.

According to Professor Knapp, Khoshk-e-daran represented a very special ecosystem of the Hyrcanian forest region. Khoshk-e-daran is the last remnant of the former wider distributed Hyrcanian swamp forests, dominated by alder (Alnus glutinosa) and Pterocarya fraxinifolia. It is the prototype of the term “dslungel”, which is common in several languages (from original Latin “dschungel”), and it was the habitat of the Caspian tiger. It is necessary to include this description in the nomination dossier.

An evening session was held from 19:00 to 21:30 pm. The participants to this meeting included:
Hans Dieter Knapp, MSS
Mahin Gazani, Project coordinator in Iran
Farhad Nazari, ICHHO
Seyyed Mohsen Hosseini, Person in charge of the project
Fariba Babaei, Project team
The main task of this evening session was to review Chapter three of the nomination dossier. For this, chapter three was carefully considered, the shortcomings of the chapter were identified and corrective measures were suggested.

Professor Knapp briefed the session on the comparative analysis he had drafted and then asked the project manager and his team to use and include the brief synthesis drafted by Tilman Jaeger, of IUCN, in the nomination dossier and once chapter three is corrected have it sent to the Michal Succow Foundation for re-reading.

**Day V**

**25 October 2017**

**8:30 – 12:30**

The fifth day began with a meeting, aimed at reviewing chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Participants:
Mohammad Hassan Talebian, ICHHTO
Hans Dieter Knapp, MSS
Delavbar Bozorgnia, ICHHTO (Mazandaran)
Farhad Nazari, ICHHTO
Seyyed Mohsen Hosseini, Person in charge of the project
Fariba Babaei, Project team
Shaghayegh Zolghadri, Project team
Initially professor Knapp briefed Dr Talebian and the meeting on the activities and outcomes of the past four days (inclusion of Lisar to the list of proposed component sites, the field visits, Siahroudbar (the need to exclude settlements and cultural landscapes from the property and the situation of the buffer zone, regarding which it was decided to have the cultural landscapes remain but all settlements removed. Prof. Knapp also suggested that it would be good if the IUCN evaluators had a look at Siahroudbar from the south of the core zone), Kojoor and the extensions to the core zone. Khoshk-e-daran (a very special ecosystem of the Hyrcanian forest region), the outcomes of the three evening sessions held on the 1st, 2nd and 4th days of the meeting.

In short Professor Knapp explained that the main point of focus of chapter three is on the justification of the nomination.

Invitation of the working group to the December (18-20, Dec. 2017) meeting in Germany:
The idea of the meeting is to exchange experiences that would be important also for the evaluation process. Because when IUCN receives two nominations on a similar issue they would ask about the reason why the nomination is not a joint one. So this exchange of experiences is necessary in order to tell IUCN that the two countries are not in competition but they are well aware of each other’s activities. The professor then explained the agenda of the upcoming Germany meeting.
The meeting continued with a review of chapter five of the nomination dossier. Emphasis was placed on the deletion of general information and the need to include the existing environmental rules and regulations in the nomination dossier, in chapter five. If they are not translated into English, it is possible to bring their titles and explain that the text of the rules are in Persian, or else it is possible to simply explain them in brief. If there is anything in the Constitution, it is necessary to translate the key sentence of the Constitution at first and the national legislations about forests and conservation of protected areas will come in the next level. (Constitution, national law and specific regulations for Caspian Forests – these are the three levels that should be included in the text).

It is also necessary to summarise the responsibilities related to the forests, starting from the highest level (GOs, Jihad-e Agriculture, and Universities)

The information is already available, beginning from page 21 of the Operational Guidelines. It is important that the illustrations should be related to the content (paragraphs 97, 98 and …) were read.

Part 5c – Means of Implementing Protective Measures- is to be completed by Dr Bali (of DoE).

Before submitting the nomination file, it is necessary for Dr Nazari (of the ICHHTO) to consider the management status of the nominated sites from the national point of view, explained Dr Talebian.

Part 5d – Existing plans related to municipality and region in which the proposed property is located - If this does not apply to the Hyrcanian Forests (due to being state-owned), this should be clearly stated in the nomination.

Part 5e – Property management plan or other management system- the main message in this management plan should be the non-intervention management for the proposed component site. If no management plan exists, it is necessary to state in the nomination that there does not exist a management plan but we have in mind to develop one in cooperation with any organisation that is involved in the management of the component sites. It was suggested to bring Dr Bali (of DoE’s) name in this section as focal point (in the capacity of general executive manager to coordinate with the related organisations).
Part 5f – *Sources and levels of finance* – this should be clearly stated and it should also be stated that this is an ongoing business. Here, Dr Talebian (of ICHHTO) explained that there are two different budgets for funding. One of these is national and secured by the government and one is obtained from the Government upon registration of a property on the World Heritage List.

Part 5g – *Sources of expertise and training in conservation and management techniques* – Universities for forest management and ecology (eg. Tarbiat Modarres University, University of Tehran, etc.), it is also possible to say that Iran has a high level of experts educated in related areas. Everything is supposed to be very short. As for the training, it is logical to explain the various meetings we have already held on this issue at local, national, regional and international levels.

Part 5h – *Visitor facilities and infrastructure* – it is also possible to refer in this section to the sites that have a capacity for tourist attraction, etc. such as Siahroudbar. Any publications, brochures etc. prepared for awareness raising should also be noted here. Dr Talebian (of ICHHTO) accepted to cover all costs of preparing informative materials and Dr Hosseini (the person in charge of the project undertook to prepare the informative materials content-wise. In addition, in case there existed any guides in the sites for awareness-raising purposes for local communities, it was suggested to have this information included in the text of the nomination file as well. It is important for the content to be consistent.

Part 5i – *Policies and programmes related to the presentation and promotion of the property* - it is necessary for the ICHHTO to use their experiences about the former cultural heritage sites. This section could include any publications and activities undertaken for awareness-raising. Anything about related policies should also be included.

Part 5j – *staffing levels* and expertise (professional, technical, maintenance) - to be described in short about all the staffs involved.

Subsequent to the discussions on chapter five, chapters four and six were also briefly reviewed.
Chapter 4
State of conservation and factors affecting the property

Already the draft of chapter four is too much and it should be shortened.
Part 4a – Present state of conservation – already explained in chapter five.
The information presented in this section would be the base-line data necessary to monitor the
status of conservation of the forests.

Part 4b – Factors affecting the property – the messages would be related to the general threats
to which the Hyrcanian Forests are subject and the fact that the inscription of the forests would
allow for a much better conservation of the forests.
No pictures of managed forests and degradation should be included. It is necessary to explain
the affecting factors but to illustrate them is not necessary.
Some information should be compared with and combined in chapter five.

Threats:
Degradation by over-grazing is a main threat to the forests. The demand for firewood by
villagers is not a degrading factor compared to over-grazing. It is necessary to explain in the
dossier that there is a governmental programme to reduce cattle and grazing. However,
industrial logging is the main threat to the integrity and the Outstanding Universal Value of the
forests. It is very important that clear-cutting is forbidden by law in Iran.

As a main message, it is necessary to say that the government has a focal program, to reduce
destruction to the forests and the inscription of the forests would certainly help to solve those
problems.

Chapter 6
Monitoring

Under chapter 6, it is necessary to explain the different types of monitoring that are currently
applied and it is necessary to write a few sentences about what is foreseen for the future in
regard to monitoring practices, mentions should also be brought of the activities carried out for
joint monitoring.
It is necessary to shorten the text.

Part 6b should focus on the specific monitoring of the Hyrcanian Forests.

The meeting ended at 12:15 am.
Prof. Knapp briefed the session on the next meeting that will be held in November 2017 in Tehran and explained that he and Ms Ahmadi Kamali will both be participating in this meeting, which will be held with the aim of finalising the draft prior to its submission.

At the end, Dr Talebian discussed the issue of contacting the Azerbaijani part in order to invite them to extend the nomination in the future. A sentence on this should also be included in the dossier.

The meeting was concluded with a vote of thanks to Professor Knapp and Ms Ahmadi Kamali of the Michael Succow Foundation by Dr Mohammad Hassan Talebian (ICHHTO) and Dr Mahin Gazani (Iran – NatCom)

After a farewell lunch hosted by the Head of the ICHHTO of Mazandaran (Delavar Bozorgnia), the group set off for a visit of Sisangan and late in the evening of the fifth day they headed to Tehran.
Annex I
List of participants
Days II, IV and V

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Mazandaran, IR of Iran
October 2017
5th Coordinating meeting supporting the preparation of the nomination file for the inscription of the Hyrcanian Forests on UNESCO's World Heritage List
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Annex II

Photographs

Photographer: Ali Ghomi Avili - ICHHTO
Photographer: Fariba Babaei