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**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

**CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF
THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Thirty-third session

**Seville, Spain
22-30 June 2009**

REPORT OF DECISIONS

Extract of the Report

Agenda Item 8B – Nominations to the World Heritage List

Decision 33 COM 8B.4

8B. NOMINATIONS TO THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

A.2 EUROPE / NORTH AMERICA

A.2.1 New Nominations

Decision: 33 COM 8B.4

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents *WHC-09/33.COM/8B* and *WHC-09/33.COM/INF.8B2*,
2. Inscribes the **The Wadden Sea, Germany and Netherlands**, on the World Heritage List under natural **criteria (viii), (ix) and (x)**;
3. Adopts the following Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

Brief Synthesis

The Wadden Sea is the largest unbroken system of intertidal sand and mud flats in the world, with natural processes undisturbed throughout most of the area. It encompasses a multitude of transitional zones between land, the sea and freshwater environment, and is rich in species specially adapted to the demanding environmental conditions. It is considered one of the most important areas for migratory birds in the world, and is connected to a network of other key sites for migratory birds. Its importance is not only in the context of the East Atlantic Flyway but also in the critical role it plays in the conservation of African-Eurasian migratory waterbirds. In the Wadden Sea up to 6.1 million birds can be present at the same time, and an average of 10-12 million pass through it each year.

Criterion (viii): The Wadden Sea is a depositional coastline of unparalleled scale and diversity. It is distinctive in being almost entirely a tidal flat and barrier system with only minor river influences, and an outstanding example of the large-scale development of an intricate and complex temperate-climate sandy barrier coast under conditions of rising sea-level. Highly dynamic natural processes are uninterrupted across the vast majority of the property, creating a variety of different barrier islands, channels, flats, gullies, saltmarshes and other coastal and sedimentary features. It is also one of the best-studied coastal areas on the planet, providing lessons of wider scientific importance for wetland and coastal management of international importance.

Criterion (ix): The Wadden Sea is one of the last remaining natural large-scale intertidal ecosystems, where natural processes continue to function largely undisturbed. Its geological and geomorphologic features are closely entwined with biophysical processes and provide an invaluable record of the ongoing dynamic adaptation of coastal environments to

global change. There are a multitude of transitional zones between land, sea and freshwater that are the basis for the species richness of the property. The productivity of biomass in the Wadden Sea is one of the highest in the world, most significantly demonstrated in the numbers of fish, shellfish and birds supported by the property. The property is a key site for migratory birds and its ecosystems sustain wildlife populations well beyond its borders.

Criterion (x): Coastal wetlands are not always the richest sites in relation to faunal diversity, however this is not the case for the Wadden Sea. The salt marshes host around 2,300 species of flora and fauna, and the marine and brackish areas a further 2,700 species, and 30 species of breeding birds. The clearest indicator of the importance of the property is the support it provides to migratory birds as a staging, moulting and wintering area. Up to 6.1 million birds can be present at the same time, and an average of 10-12 million each year pass through the property. The availability of food and a low level of disturbance are essential factors that contribute to the key role of the nominated property in supporting the survival of migratory species. The nominated property is the essential stopover that enables the functioning of the East Atlantic and African-Eurasian migratory flyways. Biodiversity on a worldwide scale is reliant on the Wadden Sea.

Integrity

The boundaries of the property include all of the habitat types, features and processes that exemplify a natural and dynamic Wadden Sea. The large area of the property encompasses over 66% of the entire Wadden Sea ecosystems and is sufficient to maintain the critical ecological processes and to protect the key features and values. However the inscribed property would be strengthened by its further extension to include the area of the Wadden Sea which lies within the territory of Denmark.

The property is subject to a comprehensive protection, management and monitoring regime which is supported by adequate human and financial resources. Human use and influences are well regulated with clear and agreed targets. Activities that are incompatible with its conservation have either been banned, or are heavily regulated and monitored to ensure they do not impact adversely on the property. As the property is surrounded by a significant population and contains human uses, the continued priority for the protection and conservation of the Wadden Sea is an important feature of the planning and regulation of use, including within land/water-use plans, the provision and regulation of coastal defences, maritime traffic and drainage. Key threats requiring ongoing attention include fisheries activities, harbours, industrial facilities and maritime traffic, residential and tourism development and climate change.

Management and protection requirements

Maintaining the hydrological and ecological processes of the contiguous tidal flat system of the Wadden Sea is an overarching requirement for the protection and integrity of this property. Therefore conservation of marine, coastal and freshwater ecosystems through the effective management of protected areas, including marine no-take zones, is essential. The effective management of the property also needs to ensure an ecosystem approach that integrates the management of the existing protected areas with other key activities occurring in the property, including fisheries, shipping and tourism.

Specific expectations for the long-term conservation and management of this property include maintaining and enhancing the level of financial and human resources required for the effective management of the property. Research, monitoring and assessment of the protected areas that make up the property also require adequate resources to be provided. Maintenance of consultation and participatory approaches in planning and management of the property is needed to reinforce the support and commitment from local communities and NGOs to the conservation and management of the property. The State Parties should also maintain their commitment of not allowing oil and gas exploration and exploitation within the boundaries of the property. Any development projects, such as planned wind farms in the North Sea, should be subject of rigorous Environmental Impacts Assessments to avoid any impacts to the values and integrity of the property.

4. Encourages the State Party of Denmark to submit a nomination of the Danish part of the Wadden Sea as soon as feasible to extent and complement the existing property and also encourages the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat as well as relevant experts that participated in the preparation of this nomination to provide support as required to the State Party of Denmark in preparing this nomination;
5. Requests the States Parties of Germany and the Netherlands to prepare and implement an overall Tourism Development Strategy for the property that fully considers the integrity and ecological requirements of the property and that provides a consistent approach to tourism operations in the property;
6. Acknowledges the research and control system provided by the States Parties of Germany and the Netherlands to mitigate the introduced species and encourage them to implement a strict monitoring programme to control invasive species associated with ballast waters and aquaculture in the property;
7. Also requests the States Parties of Germany and the Netherlands to strengthen cooperation on management and research activities with States Parties on the African Eurasian Flyways, which play a significant role in conserving migratory species along these flyways.