

The 4th International NGO Forum on World Heritage at Risk

Villa Decius, Krakow, 30 June - 1 July 2017

Resolution

Protect Tibetan Nomadic Life – Defer Inscription of the Hoh Xil Nomination

The Chinese State Party is seeking UNESCO World Heritage status for a vast Tibetan area of lakes, wetlands and wildlife known as Hoh Xil in Chinese. It is in the middle of three major nature reserves that increasingly exclude normal Tibetan land use such as nomadic herding; situate the state as the sole agency of control; and encourage mass tourism. We fully appreciate the need for conservation of this unique biodiversity. But the involvement of Tibetans – and Tibetan nomads in particular – as stewards is essential to sustaining the wildlife, the long-term health of the ecosystems, and the water resources that China and Asia depend upon. We request that:

The World Heritage Committee should defer the nomination pending a comprehensive and detailed assessment of traditional land use, involving all stakeholders as well as UNESCO experts. The traditional nomadic life of Tibetans must be respected and guaranteed in the nomination document as a precondition for the inscription, including a land use plan that establishes the right of Tibetans to graze their animals and to sustainably harvest natural produce such as herbs, berries etc. for their personal consumption.

IUCN details a number of sacred and cultural sites in the area. A mapping and description of such sites should also be undertaken and included in the nomination document. Protection of these sites should be guaranteed by law and upheld in practice, and free access to the sites as well as the freedom to practice their religion must be granted to the Tibetans at these sites. On the basis of their description, ICOMOS should submit to the WH Committee an assessment and recommendation on whether they also merit an inscription of Hoh Xil, under cultural criteria.

Krakow, 1 July 2017