

Honourable Representatives of the World Heritage Committee,

We, the undersigned civil society organisations, want to express our extreme concern for the state of the OUV of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region. We are worried that it will be irreversibly lost if the WH Committee, once again, adopts a decision to give the State Parties of North Macedonia and Albania more time to implement previous decisions and recommendations.

The World Heritage Committee was informed about the worrying trend of transformation of the property over two decades ago – since the very first joint UNESCO-ICOMOS-IUCN monitoring mission in 1998, whose report alarmed that *“the enormous increase in constructions and settlement activities has seriously altered the original balance in the region”*.

The issue of possible inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger was raised at the 40th Session in 2016. Nine years later, in 2025, we are still waiting on the implementation of some of the recommendations from the Decision 40 COM 7B.64: there is still no alternative route for the Railway Corridor VIII; the construction of Highway A2 was intensified in 2025, with the same route UNESCO was worried about; and nothing was done regarding the requested comprehensive Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) for the cumulative impacts of all proposed infrastructure plans and other major projects.

The experts from the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission in 2017 considered *“that the State Party should be provided with an opportunity to address all concerns and to implement the mission recommendations, but if these actions are not completed promptly the property may soon meet the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger.”*

Since almost none of the 19 recommendations was implemented (and this hasn't changed by 2025), in 2019 the World Heritage Centre and the advisory bodies (IUCN and ICOMOS) requested inscription of the Ohrid Region as a World Heritage in Danger. However, the WH Committee decided to give the State Parties yet another chance to implement these recommendations.

The Reactive Monitoring Mission in 2020 alarmed that the implementation of 2017 recommendations was still lacking while new threats continued to emerge and confirmed that the property OUV faces both ascertained and potential danger, thus meeting the criteria to be inscribed in the List of World Heritage in Danger. And yet, the WH Committee decided to grant the State Parties more time again. Time that was used for plans and documents that were never implemented and/or misused for further destruction and even more harmful projects.

Twenty-two years since the first alarm and after two confirmations by the experts that the Ohrid Region fulfils the criteria to be inscribed in the List of World Heritage in Danger – we are at exactly the same point, only with even greater destruction of the OUV. The 2024

Reactive Monitoring mission reported that “the state of conservation has not improved since the 2020 Reactive Monitoring Mission, and cumulative threats to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property still persist while new threats have also emerged. The conclusions of the 2020 Reactive Monitoring Mission confirmed the threats and negatively affecting factors detected by the 2017 Reactive Monitoring Mission: these conclusions remain valid after seven years.”

For a third time the experts who visited the property conclude: “The property therefore fulfils the criteria for inscription on the World Heritage List in Danger, as set out in paragraphs 179 and 180 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.”

HAVING IN MIND THE SCOPE OF THE DESTRUCTION SO FAR, THE URGENT NEED FOR RESTORATION OF THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL VALUES OF THE PROPERTY, BEING EXTREMELY WORRIED BY ALL THE PENDING PLANS AND PROJECTS AND THE REALISTIC DANGER OF IRREVERSIBLE LOSS OF ITS INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY, WE ASK YOU, DEAR REPRESENTATIVES OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE, AT THE 47TH SESSION IN PARIS, FRANCE, TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE OHRID REGION FOR ALL FUTURE GENERATIONS BY ADOPTING THE DRAFT DECISION TO INSCRIBE THE PROPERTY ON THE LIST OF WORLD HERITAGE IN DANGER.

Environmental Citizens' Association “Front 21/42”, North Macedonia



Association for the Protection and Advancement of the Environment
Eco Logic, North Macedonia



Center for Legal Research and Analysis, North Macedonia



Association for Environmental Protection and Promotion Eko-Zhivot
Kavadarci, North Macedonia



Association - International Center for Art and Sustainable
Development ART POINT – GUMNO, North Macedonia



Environmental Movement of Macedonia, North Macedonia



Transparency International Macedonia, North Macedonia



Earth Thrive, UK



Balkan Centre for the Rights of Nature, Balkan / Serbia



BALKANI Wildlife Society, Bulgaria



Milieukontakt Macedonia, North Macedonia



Journalists for human rights, North Macedonia

Balkan WASH Network, North Macedonia

BlueLink Foundation, Bulgaria



Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis Skopje, North Macedonia



Albanian Center for Environmental Governance - ACEG Center, Albania



EcoAlbania, Albania



Association Justice and Environment, Czechia



Center for Climate Change, North Macedonia



Brod Ecological Society-BED, Croatia



Organization for Political Ecology – Polekol, Serbia



Beyond Barriers Association, Albania



Zelena akcija/FoE Croatia, Croatia



H2H Foundation, Albania



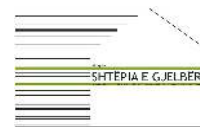
Resource Environmental Center (REC), Albania



Together for Life, Albania



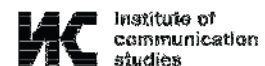
Shtëpia e Gjelbër, Albania



ADAD Malore, Albania



Institute of Communication Studies, North Macedonia



Animal and Environment Protection Association E.D.E.N., North Macedonia



Voice of Roma in Albania, Albania



Qendra "Durrësi Aktiv", Albania



Citizens' Initiative Ohrid SOS, North Macedonia



GREEN HUMANE CITY Civic Initiative, North Macedonia



Active Mobility, Albania



3Riverwatch, Austria



Udruga Zelena Istra (Association Green Istria), Croatia



VIS Albania - Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo, Albania



Development Alternative resource Center (DARC), Albania



Association IZVOR Kratovo, North Macedonia

