



Brief - IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessments

Natural World Heritage Sites are internationally recognized as the world's most important natural areas and include well-known conservation names such as the Serengeti, Great Barrier Reef and the Galapagos Islands. There are 217 such sites covering over 260 million hectares, which equates to less than 1% of the Earth's surface and over 10% of the protected areas worldwide.

These unique places are increasingly faced with threats such as mining, major infrastructure projects including roads and dams, poaching, illegal logging, agricultural encroachment and climate change. Of the 217 natural World Heritage sites, 8% are Listed in Danger, 25% are affected by serious conservation issues, and the status of many of these sites is unknown.

IUCN is undertaking Conservation Outlook Assessments in order to fill the current knowledge-gap on natural World Heritage Sites and provide a global overview of their state of conservation

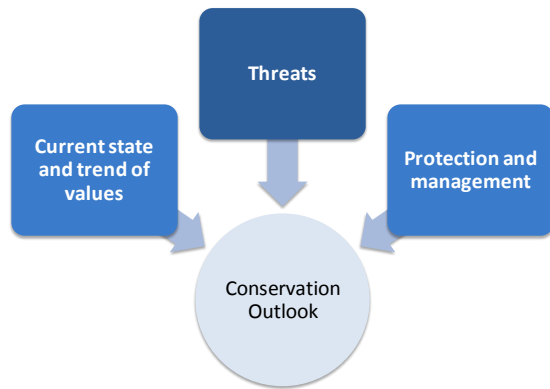
This knowledge tool will support IUCN, its 1000 member organizations, 11,000 strong scientific commissions, 1000 secretariat staff, as well as local communities, non-governmental organizations, wider civil-society and governments to:

- **Identify the most pressing conservation issues** affecting natural World Heritage sites and support sites in addressing these issues.
- **Recognize well-managed sites for their conservation efforts** and encourage the transfer of good management practices between sites.
- **Understand and communicate the benefits of these sites** for local communities and other stakeholders, for example livelihoods and ecosystem services.
- **Track the state of conservation of all natural World Heritage Sites** over time and raise public awareness of their importance for biodiversity conservation.

Conservation Outlook Assessments are a projection of the potential for a natural World Heritage Site to conserve its values over time

This projection is based on desk-based assessments of the:

1. State and trend of values;
2. Threats affecting those values; and
3. Effectiveness of protection and management.



The data for these desk-based assessments is mobilized through IUCN’s World Heritage Programme and through its network of member organizations, scientific commissions including the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and the Species Survival Commission (SSC), as well as GIS and remote sensing tools.

Assessments are designed to be independent, accurate, clearly referenced, transparent, repeatable, and open to input from a wide range of stakeholders.

Pilot assessments have been undertaken for the 5 Arab States natural World Heritage Sites

The summary table for Socotra Archipelago World Heritage Site below illustrates the application of Conservation Outlook Assessments, which were undertaken and consulted on in 2010-11 (Source: Tabe’a, Nature and World Heritage in the Arab States: towards future IUCN priorities)

Box 5. Conservation Outlook for Socotra Archipelago		
<p>The values of Socotra Archipelago consist of high species numbers of endemic plants, reptiles, birds and terrestrial invertebrates, as well as additional high conservation value terrestrial vertebrates and marine fauna, which together form a unique set of terrestrial and marine ecosystems.</p>		
Topic	Summary	Assessment
Current status of values	Most of the existing key values have enjoyed a stable and satisfactory conservation status until the late 20th Century (mainly due to Socotra’s isolation). The status of some values, particularly endemic plants, has begun to deteriorate since, with further deterioration predicted, following rapid ongoing socio-economic changes. The conservation status of reptiles and invertebrates is Data Deficient.	Low Concern
Pressures and potential threats	Pressures and potential threats to Socotra’s value are increasing rapidly. Infrastructure development, tourism and unsustainable natural resource management (following the breakdown of traditional management) are already affecting the island. Additional future threats include invasive species and climate change.	High Risk
Protection and management	A management framework for Socotra’s values is under development. It should be improved to deal with the rapidly increasing pressures and threats to the archipelago’s values, including projected further increases in tourism, infrastructure development, and unsustainable natural resource use. Priority areas include the creation of an Island Wide Authority, visitor management and the participation of local people in management.	Significant Concern
<p>Conservation outlook</p> <p><i>The conservation outlook for Socotra Archipelago is uncertain due to increasing infrastructure development and unsustainable natural resource management (following the breakdown of traditional management), and given the potential impacts of future threats such as climate change.</i></p> <p>Socotra’s values are exceptional on a global scale and have been comparatively well preserved until very recently. Therefore, much is at stake currently, as the island is undergoing rapid development that brings about unprecedented pressures and threats. The management regime of Socotra needs to be strengthened (in terms of legislative basis, cross-sector mainstreaming, capacity, science-based decision making and use of traditional knowledge), in order to ensure sustainable development, and control pressures and threats.</p>		

Conservation Outlook Assessments are designed to complement and strengthen IUCN’s existing contributions to World Heritage monitoring and evaluation processes

These assessments use established IUCN protected areas standards, apply them to World Heritage, and will demonstrate how the role of World Heritage Sites as flagship protected areas is being delivered.

Conservation Outlook Assessments will also enable IUCN to be more proactive in its advice to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee - the World Heritage Convention's decision-making body - and will guide IUCN's program of work on World Heritage in the regions, together with States Parties and other stakeholders.

IUCN's Advisory Role under the World Heritage Convention includes:

- Evaluating all natural and mixed site nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List.
- Monitoring the state of conservation of existing natural World Heritage Sites through our worldwide network of specialists and member organizations.
- Undertaking training and capacity building for site managers, governments, scientists and communities.
- Promoting on-the-ground conservation action in natural and mixed World Heritage Sites.

The Conservation Outlook Assessment process is structured around five key steps:

Step 1: Identifying and describing values - Published documentation, including Statements of Outstanding Universal Value, IUCN evaluations and other relevant information sources are reviewed to identify and describe a site's World Heritage values, as well as other important biodiversity values.

Step 2: Assessing threats - Threats are identified using a checklist to help ensure that assessments are comparable across sites. They are then assessed against five ratings: Very Low Threat, Low Threat, High Threat, Very High Threat and Data Deficient.

Step 3: Assessing protection and management - The state of 14 standardized protection and management topics is assessed against five ratings: Highly Effective, Effective, Some Concern, Serious Concern, and Data Deficient.

Step 4: Assessing the current state and trend of values - The current state and trend of values is assessed against five ratings: Good, Low Concern, High Concern, Critical and Data Deficient for World Heritage values, and also for other important biodiversity values. Trend is assessed in relation to whether the condition of a value is Improving, Stable or Deteriorating over the last five years.

Step 5: Assessing Conservation Outlook - The Conservation Outlook for each site is projected on the basis of the results of Steps 1 to 4, and is assessed against five ratings: Good, Good with some concern, Significant Concern, Critical, and Data Deficient.

Conservation Outlook will be reported in conjunction with a summary of key conservation issues, benefits for local and global communities, and a list of active conservation projects. All information is referenced so that future Conservation Outlook Assessments can review the previous information base.

For more detailed information on IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessments please visit: www.iucn.org/worldheritage_conservationoutlook and consult the *Guidelines for their application to natural World Heritage Sites*, the associated *Worksheets*, and *Tabe'a, Nature and World Heritage in the Arab States: towards future IUCN priorities* (which includes five pilot assessments), or contact Mariam Kenza Ali, World Heritage Conservation Officer, at mariam.ali@iucn.org