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PRESS RELEASE

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Attn: News Editor/ Chief Reporter/ Assignment Editor:

The Sundarbans World Heritage Site was included in the agenda for discussion by the 41st Session of the World Heritage Committee, which was held in Krakow, Poland from 2-12 July 2017 under the agenda item – examination of the state of conservation.

Not only inscription of properties on the World Heritage List is the function of the World Heritage Committee, but among others also to examine the state of conservation of World Heritage sites.

The documents adopted by the 41st World Heritage Committee are now available, including the adopted decision on the Sundarbans World Heritage Site quoted herewith:

25. The Sundarbans (Bangladesh) (N 798)

Decision: 41 COM 7B.25

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/17/41.COM/7B,
2. Recalling Decision **39 COM 7B.8**, adopted at its 39th session (Bonn, 2015),
3. Welcomes the State Party's decision not to approve the Orion power plant and Phase II of the Rampal power plant,
4. Also welcomes the State Party's decision to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the South-West region of Bangladesh, including the property, and requests the State Party to ensure that any large-scale industrial and/or infrastructure developments will not be allowed to proceed before the SEA has been completed, and to submit a copy of the SEA to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, as soon as it is available;
5. Also welcomes the information provided on ecological monitoring and notes with concern that sea level rise, salt intrusion and reductions in fresh water flows are posing a threat to the

Sundarbans' ecosystem and that the property is particularly vulnerable to impacts from these threats;

6. Takes note of the critical importance of transboundary cooperation between the States Parties of Bangladesh and India on the World Heritage properties "The Sundarbans" (Bangladesh) and "Sundarbans National Park" (India), further welcomes the efforts made by both States Parties to enhance collaboration, and urges the State Party of Bangladesh to fully implement the recommendations made by the 2016 mission in relation to ensuring adequate freshwater inflows to the property;

7. Also requests the State Party to make constant efforts to fully implement all the other recommendations made by the 2016 Reactive Monitoring mission;

8. Welcomes furthermore the development of a draft "National Oil Spill and Chemical Contingency Plan" (NOSCOP), and further requests the State Party to ensure adequate provision of funding and human resources for the implementation of the plan once it is adopted, and to provide further information and data on the monitoring of long-term impacts from recent shipping incidents involving spills of hazardous materials in proximity to the property and requests furthermore the State Party to put in place a management system for shipping to minimize negative impacts on the property, including from associated activities such as dredging;

9. Reiterates its request to the State Party to undertake the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for any future dredging of the Passur River to include an assessment of impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, as requested by the Committee;

10. Also takes note of the mission's concerns about the likely environmental impacts of the Rampal coal-fired power plant on the property arising from air and water pollution, a substantial increase in shipping and dredging, and additional removal of freshwater from an already increasingly saline environment and requests furthermore the State Party to ensure that these impacts are comprehensively assessed as part of the SEA and adequate technological measures are put in place to mitigate these impacts and to put in place adequate measures to mitigate these impacts, in order to avoid damage to the OUV of the property;

11. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2018**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 43rd session in 2019.

End of quote.

This adopted decision is available on the website of UNESCO World Heritage Centre under 41st Session of the World Heritage Committee, or alternatively on the website of UNESCO Office in Dhaka.