



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture

World Heritage Committee

Comité du patrimoine mondial



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Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee
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Your Excellency,

As you may know, the World Heritage Committee, the intergovernmental body established by the Convention concerning the Protection of the Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972, regularly examines the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List.

On several occasions, the World Heritage Committee has expressed its concern regarding the potentially negative impact of the proposed oil pipeline crossing the World Heritage site of Lake Baikal, which was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1996. During its 29th session, held in Durban, South Africa in July 2005, the World Heritage Committee emphasized that the proposed routing of such a project through the site or in its immediate vicinity would constitute a case for including the site on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in accordance with article 180b of the Operational Guidelines.

H.E. Vladimir Putin
President
Russian Federation

This message was conveyed to the Deputy Minister for Natural Resources, Valentin Stepankov, during a meeting held in Moscow on 31 October 2005 with experts from UNESCO World Heritage Centre and IUCN and was also reiterated to the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Mr. Mikhail Fradkov, in a letter sent by the Director General of UNESCO on December 22, 2005.

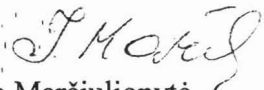
On February 1, 2006, the World Heritage Centre received a report from the Permanent Delegation of the Russian Federation to UNESCO, stating that on January 24, 2006 the expert commission responsible for the State Ecological Evaluation of the proposed pipeline routing had reached the conclusion that "the suggested pipeline route track represents great potential damage of ecological damage to Lake Baikal, a World Natural Heritage site and realization of this project in the area near the drainage basin of the Lake"(sic). The report specifies that the expert commission took its decision with a qualified majority of expert commission members of 43 out of 52 and that the conclusion would take legal force after its approval by the Federal Service for Ecological, Technological and Atomic Supervision (Rostekhnadzor), which, according to the report, was forthcoming. *However, on February 7, UNESCO received information that Rostekhnadzor had not approved the results but rather decided to extend the period of the State Ecological Evaluation and to add additional experts to the panel. On February 9, 2006, the World Heritage Centre sent a letter to the Minister for Natural resources, Mr. Yury Trutnev, asking for clarifications on this decision, on which to date no answer has been received.* Recently, the World Heritage Centre was informed that on March 1, 2006, the extended expert commission accepted the proposed routing and that this decision was approved by Rostekhnadzor. UNESCO also received reports from NGOs, denouncing certain irregularities in the procedures that led to this decision.

As the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee, I would like to express my extreme concern at these developments, which constitute a potential threat to the outstanding universal value of the property and which may result in the Committee deciding to inscribe the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger at its 30th session in Vilnius, Lithuania. I would therefore want to urge you to re-examine the proposed routing of the pipeline taking into account the World Heritage status of Lake Baikal and considering the commitment made by the Russian Federation for the

conservation of Lake Baikal World Heritage site for current and future generations in accordance with the 1972 Convention World Heritage Convention.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your continued efforts to implement the World Heritage Convention.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Ina Marčiulionytė

Ambassador, Permanent Delegate

Chairperson of World Heritage Committee

CC:

Permanent Delegation of the Russian Federation to UNESCO

Director General of UNESCO

Director of World Heritage Centre

IUCN