

**Joint declaration of intent and schedule towards the
World Natural Heritage nomination of the “Cold winter deserts of Turan”**

Prepared on 30 January 2020 on the isle of Vilm, Germany

Cold winter deserts of Turan¹ are globally outstanding natural regions, yet often overlooked internationally. They are an important habitat and migration area of species, like ungulates and migratory birds. The cold winter deserts distribute over an enormous territory and deliver a broad range of ecosystem services. Despite their ecological importance, cold winter deserts are, according to the recent thematic study on World Heritage Sites by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)², one of the least recognized biomes under the World Heritage convention worldwide. The majority of the world’s cold winter deserts are located in Central Asia – hence these countries carry both the highest potential and the strongest responsibility for the conservation of this biome. The Turan region form a specific peculiarity, characterized by a specific climate regime and as a consequence a peculiar composition of species. It also entails outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial ecosystems and communities of plants and animals. Against this background, the *Central Asian Desert Initiative (CADI)* aims at promoting the conservation and sustainable use of cold winter deserts in Central Asia, including their remarkable biological diversity. Together with the partners from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan CADI is jointly implemented by the University of Greifswald (Germany), the Michael Succow Foundation and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Sub-regional Office for Central Asia (Ankara, Turkey). The CADI project supports the World Heritage nomination(s) of Central Asian cold winter deserts, if and as desired by the pertinent States Parties to the World Heritage Convention.

To this effect, a workshop was conducting on the Isle of Vilm from 28 to 31 January 2020 bringing together 24 participants, as detailed in Annex I.

The workshop participants agree non-binding by consensus on the following:

1. Full support for the joint elaboration of a serial transnational World Heritage nomination based on a carefully selected and coherent network of Turanian cold winter deserts sites in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan was confirmed;
2. The envisaged date for submission of a joint draft nomination dossier is 30 September 2021;
3. Establishing a regional working group (RWG) for the preparation of a WHS nomination of “Cold winter deserts of Turan” consisting of 8 members (2 by each country and, with one national focal point (NFP)/CADI national project manager per country and one representative of the relevant government agency, and 2 representatives of CADI project) by 1 March 2020;
4. The RWG follows administration procedures in line with the operational guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2019);

¹ Refer to Udvardy 1975

² Lethier 2020

5. The RWG requests support from national authorities in charge for UNESCO World Heritage;
6. The NFPs determine the members to the national expert groups (NEG) and determine the schedule for concluding contracts with the NEG members by 1 May 2020. The NFP is simultaneously acting as the head of the corresponding national expert group;
7. Proposing component parts by the participating countries at latest by 1 June 2020 (coordinated meeting of the RWG members is envisaged back-to-back to the CADI Steering Committee meeting in Ashgabat in June 2020);
8. Preparation of the initial draft of new tentative lists or updated tentative lists per country under the title "Cold winter deserts of Turan" with a specific reference to the respective component parts by the NFP by 1 July 2020;
9. After confirmation by the RWG the NFP arrange the submission of the new/updated tentative lists to World Heritage Centre via the respective governmental national structures;
10. Underline the necessity disseminating information, capacity development, liaising and coordinating with the provincial officials of the associated provinces, where the sites are located as well as the local communities by means of information meetings for their coordination and cooperation in the process of the project by the respective entities, throughout the project and beyond;
11. Developing draft of the Memorandum of Understanding by 15 September 2020;
12. Formulating the nomination dossier for inscription of the "Cold winter deserts of Turan" on World Heritage List, with a tentative emphasis on World Natural Heritage criteria (ix), (x) by 31 May 2021;
13. Organizing a stakeholder workshop preferably on 5 June 2021 involving the various levels of government and NGOs, organised by the CADI Regional Secretariat in Tashkent with the support of the NFPs;
14. Developing general management plan by 31 July 2021;
15. Revising and completing the nomination dossier according to the suggestions of the RWG by the end of August 2021;
16. Revision and finalizing the last version of the dossier in accordance with feedback from RWG till the end of September 2021;
17. Submitting the nomination dossier to the respective governmental agencies for submission to the World Heritage Centre for technical check by end of September 2021.

Annex I: List of participants