

Wadden Sea Board

**WSB 21
17 November 2017
Vester Vested, Denmark**



Agenda Item: 5.9 International Cooperation

Subject: Formalizing the cooperation with the Dolomites with a MoU

Document No. WSB 21/5.9/3

Date: 27 October 2017

Submitted by: CWSS

Since early 2017, the Common Wadden Sea has established enhanced contacts with the Dolomites World Heritage in Italy. Despite the apparent difference between the two properties, they also share many similarities and the exchange with this easily accessible European site has thus far proven to be very beneficial.

In order to enhance this cooperation, which could also offer valuable insights for the realization of the planned Wadden Sea World Heritage Partnership Center, CWSS proposes the conclusion of a MoU with the Dolomites World Heritage, which expressly supports this initiative on the part of CWSS.

Proposal: The meeting is invited

- 1) To comment on the initiative and to instruct the CWSS to outline a first draft;
- 2) To consider a signing of the proposed MoU at the TGC Leeuwarden 2018 and to invite a delegation from the Dolomites to TGC 2018.

Objective

To intensify the international cooperation and information exchange on sustainable development with the aim of ensuring that the outstanding universal value of the Sites (namely the Wadden Sea and the Dolomites) is maintained.

Background

In 2009 the World Heritage Committee inscribed the Wadden Sea and the Dolomites on the World Heritage List.

The Dolomites were added to the World Heritage List due to their outstanding natural beauty and the geological significance of their limestone formations.

The site comprises a mountain range in the northern Italian Alps, numbering 18 peaks which rise to above 3,000 metres and cover 141,903 ha. It features some of the most beautiful mountain landscapes anywhere, with vertical walls, sheer cliffs and a high density of narrow, deep and long valleys. A serial property of nine areas that present a diversity of spectacular landscapes of international significance for geomorphology marked by steeples, pinnacles and rock walls, the site also contains glacial landforms and karst systems. It is characterized by dynamic processes with frequent landslides, floods and avalanches. The property also features one of the best examples of the preservation of Mesozoic carbonate platform systems, with fossil records.

The Wadden Sea is the largest tidal flat system in the world, where natural processes run undisturbed. The Site stretches for roughly 500 km along the coasts of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. The Wadden Sea was inscribed into the UNESCO World Heritage List for its globally unique geological and ecological values. It is home to numerous plant and animal species. It is also a breeding and wintering area for up to 12 million birds per annum and it supports more than 10 percent of 29 species.

Many of the characteristics and challenges faced by the Wadden Sea Site are similar to those of the Dolomites. Firstly, both Sites were inscribed on the World Heritage List following selection criterion 8, namely for their geological importance: one site is a living archipelago which is constantly changing and evolving, the other is a fossil archipelago dating back to the Triassic. The two UNESCO Sites also share the challenge of jointly managing a Property which is a single entity from an ecological point of view but which has been divided up by man. The Wadden Sea borders Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, each with their respective language, competent authorities and legislation. The Dolomites, located within the boundaries of five Italian provinces, also have different linguistic and administrative borders. Last but not least the WH Committee requested both Sites to examine the key issues involved in maintaining a balance between sustainable tourism and conservation. Over the past few years, both the Dolomites and the Wadden Sea have therefore developed and adopted a sustainable tourism strategy in response to this request of UNESCO.

At the beginning of 2017 the UNESCO Dolomites Foundation and CWSS established an informal partnership by partnering at the ITB Berlin in March 2017 and intensifying the contact during the Wadden Sea Day 2017.

Analysis

International cooperation with other UNESCO Sites is crucial. Therefore, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee encourages international partnerships between Sites to share good practices on how to continuously work towards managing, monitoring and preserving the World Heritage properties.

Comparable to the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, which was founded in 1987 and coordinates, promotes and supports activities of the Trilateral Cooperation and is also the central contact for the UNESCO Wadden Sea World Heritage, the Fondazione Dolomiti – Dolomiten – Dolomites – Dolomitis UNESCO was set up in 2010 to ensure the effective, coordinated management of the Dolomites property and as a single point of contact. Its job is to encourage communication and collaboration between the local authorities that manage and administer the Site. The Foundation plays a fundamental role in coordinating and harmonizing management policies for the Dolomite property, with the aim of devising a common strategy.

A future cooperation with the Dolomites would be consistent with and make a notable contribution to the new phase in the cooperation for the Wadden Sea World Heritage marked by the planned Wadden Sea World Heritage Partnership Center. The TWSC could benefit from the experience and lessons learned by the Foundation Dolomites, an entity created specifically to foster the sustainable development of an area with historical diversity. In order to address specific themes relevant to the property - such as its geological heritage, landscape heritage, protected areas, promotion of sustainable tourism, socio-economic development, mobility, education & scientific research - a network management was set up.

The experience gained in managing these inter-regional and inter-provincial operating networks would be highly relevant for the pilot phase of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Partnership Center (PC) and Partnership Hub (PH) in which an Agreement of Cooperation (AOC) model is implemented.

Proposal

The forthcoming Trilateral Governmental Conference in Leeuwarden, Netherlands, is a good opportunity to strengthen cooperation between the Dolomites and The Wadden Sea World Heritage, in line with the demands of the World Heritage Convention and for the benefits of both sites. CWSS therefore proposes the conclusion of an MoU between the Wadden Sea World Heritage and the Dolomites World Heritage. This initiative is expressly supported by the Dolomites World Heritage.

Since both sites are located in Europe, they are easily mutually accessible and offer excellent prospects for synergetic work.

A close cooperation between these two properties would strongly contribute to the discussion on how to pool expertise and generate synergies and facilitate networking beyond the merely governmental sector for the benefit of the Wadden Sea World Heritage.

The following areas of knowledge exchange are proposed:

- 1 Socio-Economic Development and Sustainable Tourism
- 2 Education and Scientific Research
- 3 Networked Management of inter-regional and inter-provincial operating networks

The following activities are proposed (other options not excluded):

- exchange visits and the transfer of know-how of CWSS / Foundation and partners,
- mutual participation of representatives at symposia, trade fairs e.g. ITB Berlin, meetings and arrangements in the framework of this cooperation,
- Study visits with possible PH partners with the goal to learn about the network management.

It is not envisaged that this cooperation would place a problematic additional burden on CWSS, since the intervals between actual events carried out in the framework of such MoUs are relatively long. Moreover, the Dolomites WH is far more easily accessible than the current MoU partners in Korea and Mauretania, which would facilitate the exchange.