Final Decision: 37 COM 7A.4

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-13/37.COM/7A.Add,

2. Recalling Decision 36 COM 7A.4 adopted at its 36th session (Saint-Petersburg, 2012),

3. Addresses its most sincere condolences to the families of the guards killed in operations for the protection of the Park;

4. Expresses its grave concern as to the degradation of the security situation that has serious repercussions on the state of conservation of the property, notably the loss of control of a part of the property, the increase in organized and armed poaching, and the illegal occupation of several parts of the property with the risk of cancelling the progress accomplished in the implementation of the corrective measures;

5. Recalls the commitments taken by the Congolese Government in the Kinshasa Declaration of January 2011, notably regarding the security of the World Heritage properties and the strengthening of ICCN operational capacities;

6. Reiterates its deep concern that the State Party has not yet revised the authorizations for petroleum exploration in the Park, as requested in its Decision 36 COM 7A.4, and on the consequences of the declaration of the Minister of Environment indicating that the government envisaged dezatting a part of the Park for petroleum exploitation;

7. Expresses its serious concern regarding the project for a new Hydrocarbons Code that would allow petroleum exploitation in protected areas, including World Heritage properties, and requests the State Party to renounce this project;

8. Reiterates its request to the State Party to cancel all the oil exploitation permits granted within the property and recalls the incompatibility of oil and mining exploitation and exploration with World Heritage status;

9. Also recalls its appeal to the TOTAL and SOCO companies to subscribe to the commitments already accepted by SHELL and ICMM (International Council on Mining and Metals) not to undertake petroleum or mining exploration or exploitation within World Heritage properties, and its request to States Parties to the Convention to do their utmost to ensure that the mining or petroleum companies established on their territories do not damage World Heritage properties, in accordance with Article 6 of the Convention;

10. Also requests the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN reactive monitoring mission to assess the state of conservation of the property and notably the status of the petroleum exploration projects and the impact of the security situation on the property and, if necessary, to revise the corrective measures and their timetable;

11. Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2014, a detailed report on the state of conservation of the property, including an update of the progress accomplished in the implementation of the corrective measures, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 38th session in 2014;

 12.Decides to continue the application of the Reinforced Monitoring Mechanism of the property;

13. Also decides to retain Virunga National Park (Democratic Republic of the Congo) on the List of World Heritage in Danger.