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## The Culture Sector World Heritage Centre

Mr Christian Schubböck  
Alliance for Nature  
Thaliastraße 7  
A-1160 Vienna  
Austria

Ref.: CLT/WHC/7061/AT/AOD

10 December 2013

Subject : **State of Conservation of the property "Semmering Railway"**

Sir,

I wish to thank you for the document you sent to the World Heritage Centre, entitled "Clarifications concerning the World Cultural Heritage Semmering Railway", which deals with the status of World Heritage property "Semmering Railway" as well as with development projects for a tunnel in the vicinity of the property.

Please be assured that we have taken due note of your concerns, and have transmitted your statement to the relevant national authorities, notably to the Permanent Delegation of Austria to UNESCO and the Austrian National Commission for UNESCO.

Let me however clarify the following points:

1. The property was inscribed as a cultural property by the World Heritage Committee in 1998. The inscribed area is 156.18 ha, closely following the train tracks, and is surrounded by a buffer zone of 8581.21 ha (Decision 22COM VIII.B.1). As you rightly point out, the Buffer Zone is not considered part of a World Heritage property as such.
2. The property was inscribed on the basis of criteria (ii) and (iv), both of which are cultural criteria. The formulation of those criteria, as adopted by the Committee, highlights that it is the technical aspects of the railway's construction as well as the *accessibility* of those "areas of great natural beauty" and the subsequent built developments that constitute the property's Outstanding Universal Value. The landscape itself is therefore not part of the Outstanding Universal Value for which the property was inscribed. Please also note that the property is not, to this date, inscribed as a Cultural Landscape.
3. The name of the property, as inscribed in the two working languages of the 1972 *World Heritage Convention*, is "Semmering Railway" / "Ligne de chemin de fer de Semmering". Any subsequent German translation of the property's name ought to have respected the name officially adopted by the Committee.

4. The boundary clarification adopted by the Committee in 2009 (Decision 33COM 8D) was appropriate in form and content. Given that no major change was made to the dimensions of the property's core area, and that the clarification happened as a result of statutory processes (notably the First Cycle of Periodic Reporting and the Retrospective Inventory), the Austrian authorities were not required to submit a re-nomination file.

Hoping that this information will clarify the areas of competence of UNESCO with regards to this property, let me take this opportunity to thank you for your engagement in favour of World Heritage.

Yours sincerely,



Kishore Rao  
Director

cc: Permanent Delegation of Austria to UNESCO  
Austrian National Commission for UNESCO  
Focal points for World Heritage in Austria