

Berlin, March 04, 2024

Dr. Lazare Eloundou Assomo  
Director, World Heritage Center

Dr. Jyoti Hosagrahar, Deputy-Director World Heritage Center  
UNESCO, Paris

Dear Lazare Eloundou Assomo and dear Jyoti Hosagrahar,

I write with cordial thanks for your hospitality and participation in the recent World Heritage Watch meetings.

I write today, because one of the cases we discussed then has newly reached a highly alarming stage, which requires instant intervention: The case of the Pao-de-Açúcar, the Sugar Loaf Mountain so emblematic for the “The Urban Cultural Landscape of Rio de Janeiro”. A new license is being announced, overriding a previous court order that stopped the destructive work on the so-called “Tiroleza” structure atop Sugar Loaf Mountain.

We urge you to manifest your concerns immediately, before more irreversible damage would occur shortly. We have also written to the President of Brazil in this regard.

The world-renowned rock formations of Pão de Açúcar (Sugar Loaf Mountain) and the Urca peninsula below are emblematic for the magnificent beauty of Brazil’s tropical landscapes. Recently first illicit interventions have already caused damage to the rock surface – as demonstrated in pictures shown at the World Heritage Meeting. With the reinstatement of the so-called „Tiroleza“ construction permit more damage will ensue, unless stopped swiftly.

In accordance with paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention, we therefore ask the World Heritage Center to immediately request, for its review, at the level of Brazil’s Government all plans for the Pão de Açúcar Mountain Zip Line.

We urge the World Heritage Center to insist with Government to stop any physical works, and not to take any decision that could irreversibly damage the integrity of „the Urban Cultural Landscape of Rio de Janeiro“, before the World Heritage Committee and it’s Advisory Bodies would have examined the project. We are convinced that the situation requires a Heritage Impact Assessment, in view of the manifest concerns and public opinion in Brazil.

Local authorities are as yet not living up to the Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention, although they have been repeatedly called upon by ICOMOS. This brings about our emergency request to the World Heritage Committee to list “The Urban Cultural Landscape of Rio de Janeiro” in the „Sites in Danger“ List of the Convention until current threats cease.

At the same time, we plead with the World Heritage Center to also send a technical mission to Rio de Janeiro for an onsite analysis of damages already incurred, and recommendations for proper restoration.

With sincere thanks for your urgent attention,

Maritta Koch-Weser  
President, World Heritage Watch

