

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:650

ANSWERED ON:26.11.2014

COMMITTEES ON WESTERN GHATS

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**Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether the Government has appointed Expert Panel/Working Group for making suggestions for the conservation and development of Western Ghats;
- (b) if so, the details of such Panel/working groups and recommendations made by them;
- (c) whether the Government has decided to proceed with the recommendations of High Level working Group, headed by Dr. Kasturirangan instead of Prof. Madhav Gadgil Expert Panel;
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and
- (e) the present implementation status of the recommendations and the details of the commitments of the Government for inscription of sites across Western Ghats as World Heritage Sites?

**Answer**

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)

(a) & (b): The Government had constituted the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) under the Chairmanship of Prof Madhav Gadgil on 4th March 2010. The major recommendations given in the WGEEP report, submitted to this Ministry in August 2011, inter alia relate to demarcation of ecologically sensitive zones in Western Ghats and measures for management of these ecologically sensitive zones. The Ministry undertook consultative process by seeking comments /views of the concerned State Governments/ Central Ministries and also inviting comments of other stakeholders on the report.

Subsequently, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted a High Level Working Group (HLWG) under the Chairmanship of Dr. K. Kasturirangan, the then Member (Science), Planning Commission on 17th August, 2012 to inter alia examine the WGEEP Report in a holistic and multidisciplinary fashion keeping in view the comments received from the concerned State Governments / Central Ministries / Stakeholders. The HLWG submitted its report on 15th April 2013. The major recommendations of the HLWG inter alia include (i) definition and delimitation of Western Ghats Region and (ii) identification of eco-sensitive area in the Western Ghats.

(c) & (d): The Ministry is examining and further processing the High Level Working Group report which is a subsequent report to the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel report.

(e): A Western Ghats Natural Heritage Management Committee (WGNHMC) is already functional under the auspices of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India to deal with coordination and integration issues related to World Heritage Sites in Western Ghats. All 39 components and 7 sub-clusters of Western Ghats World Heritage Sites are managed under specific management/working plans duly approved by State/Central Governments.

As per the inscription decision of the World Heritage Committee, the State Party has to: (i) take into account the outcomes of scientific studies of institutes specialized in the field and their recommendations, (ii) ensure proactive tourism management in anticipation of increased future visitation and to ensure that visitation remains within the capacity of the property, (iii) ensure any proposed infrastructure developments are subject to rigorous prior impact assessments, to determine if they are appropriate, including via reporting to the World Heritage Committee in line with paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines to the World Heritage Convention, and (iv) establish improved coordination and integration between the components, particularly through preparation and implementation of an overarching management plan or framework for the serial property as a whole.