Nyungwe National Park in Rwanda's Southern and Western Province has been officially designated as a natural World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee. It is the first site in Rwanda to be featured on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

The inscription of Nyungwe National Park serves as a vital step in ensuring its long-term conservation, preserving its natural heritage for future generations, and promoting sustainable development for neighbouring communities.

Established as a natural reserve in 1933, the forest became a national park in 2005 in a bid by the Government to bolster its protection and safeguard the thousands of endangered and endemic species it harbours.

Covering an expanse of 101,900 hectares, Nyungwe National Park stands as the largest block of natural forest in the region. Boasting remarkable biodiversity, it is home to over a dozen species of primates, 322 bird species, 200 identified orchids, and nearly 300 butterfly species, including several endemic to the park.

The management of the park falls under the hands of the African Parks Network, a non-governmental organisation specialising in conservation, in partnership with the Rwandan Government.

Speaking after the inscription, Dr. Jean Damascene Bizimana, Minister of National Unity and Civic Engagement who was representing the Government of Rwanda, said:

"*The Government of the Republic of Rwanda welcomes the decision to inscribe Nyungwe National Park on the World Heritage List. This inscription is not only a contribution to the preservation of Rwanda's natural heritage, but also of particular significance to the Rwandan people, for whom it is the first site inscribed on this universal list.*"

The inscription of Nyungwe National Park into the UNESCO World Heritage list follows the inclusion of Gishwati-Mukura National Park in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves in 2020. This recognition builds upon the long-established presence of the Volcanoes Biosphere Reserve in northwest Rwanda, which has been a part of the network since 1983. Together, these designations underscore Rwanda's commitment to conserving its natural heritage and contributing to global

conservation efforts.