



**FIJI STATE PARTY PROGRESS REPORT:
THE HISTORICAL PORT TOWN OF LEVUKA – A WORLD HERITAGE SITE**

1st February 2015.



L E V U K A
National Heritage Site

**FIJI STATE PARTY REPORT TO THE WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE
OUTLINING THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AFTER THE
SUCCESSFUL INSCRIPTION OF THE HISTORICAL PORT TOWN OF
LEVUKA AS A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE AT ITS 37TH SESSION OF
HELD AT PHNOM PENH, 2013.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Historical Port Town of Levuka Fiji was successfully inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List during the 37th Session of the World Heritage Committee meeting held in [Phnom Penh] Cambodia in June 2013. This landmark decision by the committee was received with jubilation by the people of Fiji after it has taken such a long time (perhaps 20 years) to make one of Fiji's national significant sites to be given such international recognition.

A national celebration to commemorate the successful inscription was held in December 2014 and presided by the President of the Republic of Fiji, His Excellency Ratu Epeli Nailatikau. The post inscription celebrations also marked the unveiling and launching of various priority heritage projects earmarked for the town. These projects had emanated from the approved Levuka Management Plan.

The State Party of Fiji noted that as part of the inscription of the Historical Port Town of Levuka the World Heritage Committee made 5 recommendations that Fiji was to act upon and to submit by 1st February 2015 a report to the World Heritage Center outlining the progress made in the implementation of the aforementioned.

The State Party of Fiji had made considerable progress in finalizing the five recommendations and these are detailed in this submission. At the outset, Fiji would like to state that the timeframe outlined by the World Heritage Committee was a challenge as most are yet to be fully realized. This is particularly due to the existing socio-political climate in Fiji especially in trying to foster and make visible the concepts and ideals of the 1972 World Heritage Convention so that the general populace will be able to grasp fully its principles, long processes necessary so that all reviews undertaken in terms of regulatory mechanisms enhanced is fully realized, and the political transitions recently experienced after the General Election in September – October 2014 which saw the full restoration of democracy in the country.

Nevertheless, this report provides a synopsis of progress made by the State Party of Fiji in as far as:

- ➔ addressing the Fiji World Heritage Decree (now Fiji Heritage Bill) which is ready for cabinet submission and subsequent tabulation in Parliament;
- ➔ highlighting the enormous that has been pursued to facilitate a medium term plan for the conservation of structures in poor condition; and specifically look into the professional development of expertise currently being addressed. Regional and International Organizations such as WHITRAP and ICOMOS (Australia) are assisting the State Party in this regard;

- ➔ the inclusion of archeological sites in the Levuka Heritage Register or Inventory which has been fully implemented;
- ➔ revising various regulatory mechanisms to enhance the need to keep the maximum building height within level of the existing building and integrating the requirement for heritage impact assessment for any type of tourism development in Levuka Town;
- ➔ The finalizing of the Levuka Town Planning Scheme which is in the process of being approved by the Minister responsible for Town and Country Planning in Fiji.

With progress thus far, and the increased budgetary provisions for the Levuka World Heritage Initiative in 2015 by the Fijian Government (including international funding and support), the State Party of Fiji is adamant that the five (5) recommendations by the 37th Session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee for the Historical Port of Levuka will fully materialize by the end of 2015.

RECOMMENDATION 1 PROGRESS

The 37th Session of the World Heritage Committee recommended the State Party of Fiji to give consideration to:

- (a) **Approving, promulgating and implementing the Fiji World Heritage Decree which provides for legal protection of the property and the buffer zone;**

STATE PARTY RESPONSE

In relation to the Fiji World Heritage Decree, the State Party of Fiji has reviewed and revised the name of the decree which is now known as the *Fiji Heritage Bill*. The use of “world heritage” in the legislation is synonymous with Fiji sites that have been successfully inscribed and does not fully comprehend those Fiji sites that have the “potential” to become world heritage sites amongst others. Similarly, given the restoration of its parliament system, all draft laws prepared for passing by the State Party will now be called “bills”. The Fiji Heritage Bill 2015 is attached as ANNEX 1.

In as far as approvals is concerned, the State Party has expedited consultations with the Fijian Solicitor General’s Office including finalization and confirmation by the Fijian Attorney General. A total of 9 drafts of the *Fiji Heritage Bill* had gone through a review process with key stakeholders of government, the local community and the Solicitor General’s Office for revisions. A key feature of the bill is the permanent inclusion of the concept of buffer zone management for inscribed world heritage sites and potential world heritage sites in Fiji, including those listed in UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List for Fiji. A cabinet memorandum has been prepared and approved by the Minister responsible for Heritage and Arts in July 2014, however due to unforeseen medical condition of the referred Minister, the State Party was not able to tabulate the decree and paper at the last Cabinet Meeting (August 2014) before the General Elections in September 2014. In lieu of the recent elections, now the bill has to go through parliament and the **new** Minister responsible for Heritage and Arts need to go through a thorough orientation process (which is ongoing) to fully comprehend the content and the implications of the draft bill including the concept of world heritage. The Draft Cabinet Memorandum is attached ANNEX 2.

The promulgation including the subsequent implementation of the Fiji Heritage Bill has yet to materialize. The State Party is working with its Solicitor General’s Office to finalize the Bill early this year for cabinet approval and early tabulation in Parliament. Explanatory notes for the 37 Clauses of the Fiji Heritage Bill is being prepared to allow parliament understand the basis, context and principles of the Bill. A timeframe leading up to the promulgating of the bill is attested:

| ACTIVITIES | (Months) 2015 | | | | |
|--|----------------|-----|-----|-----|------------------|
| | JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY |
| 1. Due Date for Ministers Meeting Papers –paper on Draft Fiji Heritage Bill | | | | | |
| 2. Closing Date for submission of Draft Fiji Heritage Bill for Cabinet Meeting | | | | | |
| 3. Draft Fiji World Heritage Bill passed for Parliament approval | | | | | |
| 4. Gazetting & Promulgation of Fiji Heritage Act | | | | | DTC ¹ |

¹ DTC – *date to be confirmed* – this depends on the legal and administrative procedures governing the promulgation of a decree/law in Fiji

RECOMMENDATION 2 PROGRESS

The 37th Session of the World Heritage Committee recommended the State Party of Fiji to give consideration to:

(b) Developing a medium-term plan for the conservation of structures in poor condition and for the professional development of expertise in conservation;

STATE PARTY RESPONSE

Prior to the development of a medium-term plan for conservation of structures in poor condition, a survey of the status and condition of the 196 heritage buildings in the Historical Port Town was undertaken by the State Party in 2014. The results of the survey were mapped as an overlay onto a cadastral map of Levuka Town. The survey indicated that approximately 50% of the buildings are in a state of generally satisfactory maintenance. Approximately 23% of the buildings require maintenance and 23% are in poor condition, requiring urgent remedial action. 4% of buildings have disappeared. The major causes of poor conditions of structures have been identified as concrete degradation, dry and wet rot, and corrosion of tin roofing. The humid tropical climate of Levuka, and its close proximity to the sea are additional causes. A Health Status Report and Map of the property is attached as ANNEX 3 and 3.1.

The State Party, with assistance from Heritage New Zealand, NZAID², and JICA³, is currently undertaking a preliminary field survey of the town landscape and buildings selected from the survey of 2014. The current survey will identify critical issues based on:

- Physical conditions of buildings
- External conditions which impact buildings
- Selection and verification of critical buildings for repair.

The State Party will work closely with Heritage New Zealand and JICA to develop a Conservation Plan for Levuka with clear implementation guidelines. This will greatly assist key stakeholders to understand all aspects of preserving heritage buildings in the town, and also facilitate the provision of both the resources and relevant skills required for this purpose.

The State Party will work closely with Heritage New Zealand and JICA to source funding for buildings which require urgent remedial action.

In addition, the State Party is challenged with the lack of expertise needed for the proper maintenance and restorative action required for heritage buildings. This has resulted in

² New Zealand Agency for International Development.

³ Japanese International Cooperation Agency

improper alterations to several buildings. This is also compounded by a lack of funding, non-availability of the correct building materials, no access to skilled trades and craftsmen and a poor planning approach. However, to address this, the State Party has engaged the services of a Built Heritage Advisor through the Fiji International Technical Volunteer Program. The Built Heritage Advisor was identified through the International National Trusts Organization and has been placed with the National Trust of Fiji to develop the professional expertise in built heritage within the National Trust of Fiji, partners and building owners in Levuka. A progressive report by the Built Heritage Advisor on his visits to Levuka in 2014 is appended as ANNEX 4.

Similarly, the State Party has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with JICA, Center for Advanced Tourism Studies (CATS) of Hokkaido University, Japan, the Levuka Town Council and the National Trust of Fiji, for a capacity building project on “*System Building for Community Based Heritage Management and Tourism Development in Levuka Town and broader Ovalau Area in Fiji*”. [The MOU is attached as ANNEX 5]. The purpose of this project is to develop the capacity of Levuka Town management organizations, drafting of guidelines for landscape preservation and tourism planning, visitor attraction and operation of the site. The State Party, with assistance from JICA is currently undertaking a tourism survey based on tours, marketing, sales, service providers, villagers and tourists.

The State Party, with assistance from Heritage New Zealand and JICA, will establish a practical workshop for carpentry, masonry, stained glass and skills training for youth and local communities on the island of Ovalau. Heritage building owners in Levuka Town need to be supported to undertake the maintenance necessary to preserve their buildings. The workshop will enable the local community to undergo appropriate and specialized skills training and have access to the correct building materials, and colour codes for Levuka.

With the concept of Historic Urban Landscape promoted by UNESCO, the State Party proposes to work with WHITRAP⁴, the Levuka Town Council and the Pacific Heritage Hub (PHH) – in cooperation with the University of the South Pacific (USP), on the implementation of a research and symposium for the Historical Port Town to train citizens of Levuka, urban planners and related institutions on heritage conservation, future planning and design of the contemporary town. A **draft** and unsigned Agreement on the Strategic Cooperation between the aforementioned institutions regarding the proposed capacity building exercise is attached as ANNEX 6.

⁴ World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for Asia and the Pacific.

RECOMMENDATION 3 PROGRESS

The 37th Session of the World Heritage Committee recommended the State Party of Fiji to give consideration to:

(c) Including archaeological sites in the inventory and completing it as soon as possible;

STATE PARTY RESPONSE

The State Party has completed the Levuka and Ovalau Heritage Register, which is the list of heritage places in Levuka and on Ovalau. The form of the register follows the structure provided in the Levuka Management Plan (Figure 56). A total number of one hundred and ninety five (195) historical places, existing buildings and structures in the nominated area are included in the Register. The archaeological sites identified and mapped by the Fiji Museum have also been included in the Register. The full Levuka Heritage Register is appended as ANNEX 7.

Furthermore, the State Party is working on the transfer of the register to appropriate software for uploading onto the State Party and key stakeholder websites. This will allow for the register to be accessible on-line.

The State Party will work closely with the Fiji Museum to research Levuka's Maritime Heritage which will be included on the Levuka Heritage Register.

The State Party will update the Levuka Heritage Register on an annual basis.

RECOMMENDATION 4 PROGRESS

The 37th Session of the World Heritage Committee recommended the State Party of Fiji to give consideration to:

- (d) Keeping the maximum building height and building density specified for hotel development to the prevalent level of existing buildings and integrating the requirement of Heritage Impact Assessments for any type of tourism developments in the property, buffer zone and wider setting;**

STATE PARTY RESPONSE

The State Party through the Department of Town and Country Planning has completed the revision of the *Levuka Town Planning Scheme* and is currently preparing the documents for public notification. The actual Scheme map was completed in 2013 and is attached as ANNEX 8.

The revised Scheme also includes amendments to the *Levuka Town General Provisions (Cap 139) regulations* to address maximum building height and density prevalent to existing buildings and façade of the main town center. The Provisions within the document specifies the various types of Tourism developments in regards to density, location in the various zones (buffer and wider setting) and the periphery to the town boundary. A new addition to the General Provisions include the insertion of the maximum density and requirements for any hotel development as articulated in *Provision 9: Schedule C* of the Levuka Town Planning General Provisions. The revised Levuka Town Scheme General Provisions is attached as ANNEX 9.

The State Party work on the regulations for building heights is further enhanced with the revision to the Levuka Town Planning Scheme Statement. This is attached as ANNEX 10.

The State Party, since consultations begun for the review of the Levuka Town Scheme, has been assessing all new development applications according to revised regulations and requirements or recommendations issued by the World Heritage Committee when Levuka Town was inscribed. This will allow easy transition and subsequent implementation of the, finally, approved Levuka Town Planning Scheme in 2015.

With regards to considerations for heritage impact assessments conducted before major developments, the State Party submits all new development requests to a Levuka Heritage Committee established to consider, assess and make recommendations before a final decision is made.

The State Party recommends and will work towards establishing a Town Planner Position for the Levuka Town Council (with Heritage and Conservation background) to be based in Levuka. This will allow for the implementation of the soon-to-be approved Levuka Town Planning Scheme. Not only has this been an issue with Levuka but with other municipalities in Fiji. Hence the State Party is closely liaising with other town planning organization in the region, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and partner Government Ministries to establish and implement a human resource programme engaging professional town planners in the various municipalities in the country including the Historical Port Town of Levuka.

RECOMMENDATION 5 PROGRESS

The 37th Session of the World Heritage Committee recommended the State Party of Fiji to give consideration to:

(e) Finalizing the Levuka Town Planning Scheme.

STATE PARTY RESPONSE

The State Party through the Department of Town and Country Planning is responsible for the review and preparation of the Levuka Town Planning Scheme including the legislative documents and regulations on the development and protection of areas within the nominated property and its peripheries.

A Revised Levuka Town Planning Scheme has been completed and will be provisionally approved by the Director Town and Country Planning in February 2015. In accordance with the Fiji Town Planning Act Cap. 139, Section 19(2), the Levuka Town Council shall publicly notify the revised scheme in the daily newspapers and the State Party Government Gazette for objections. Thereafter, the documents will be submitted for consideration and endorsement by the **new** Minister of Local Government, Housing and Environment before it can become operational. The State Party purports to complete this process in this first half of 2015 so that the scheme can be implemented in November 2015.

The Revised Town planning Scheme consists of the following documents;

- (a) Revised Levuka Town planning Scheme Map (Refer to ANNEX 8);
- (b) Levuka Town planning Scheme General Provisions (Refer to ANNEX 9);
- (c) Levuka Town Planning Scheme Statement (Refer to ANNEX 10).

ANNEXES

| PAGE No. | FORMAT | NAME OF DOCUMENT | COPYRIGHT OWNER | CONTACT OF OWNER |
|----------|------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| 5 | PDF - narrative | Annex 1: Fiji Heritage Bill 2015 | Department of Heritage Arts | Level 4, Takayawa Building, <u>TOORAK</u> Ph: (679) 3316955 |
| 5 | PDF - narrative | Annex 2: Draft Cabinet Memorandum on the Fiji Heritage Bill 2015 | Department of Heritage Arts | Level 4, Takayawa Building, <u>TOORAK</u> Ph: (679) 3316955 |
| 7 | PDF –Narrative and images | Annex 3: Health Status Report | National Trust of Fiji | 3 Maáfu Street, <u>SUVA</u> Ph: (679) 3301807 |
| 7 | PDF – Map | Annex 3.1: Map for Health Check | National Trust of Fiji | 3 Maáfu Street, <u>SUVA</u> Ph: (679) 3301807 |
| 8 | PDF - Narrative and images | Annex 4: Progressive Report on Trips to Levuka by Built Heritage Advisor | National Trust of Fiji | 3 Maáfu Street, <u>SUVA</u> Ph: (679) 3301807 |
| 8 | PDF - Narrative | Annex 5: MOU Signed by JICA, State Party, National Trust of Fiji, and Hokkaido University | National Trust of Fiji | 3 Maáfu Street, <u>SUVA</u> Ph: (679) 3301807 |
| 8 | PDF - Narrative | Annex 6: Draft MOU between WHITRAP, LTC, PHH, and State Party | Department of Heritage & Arts | Level 4, Takayawa Building, <u>TOORAK</u> Ph: (679) 3316955 |
| 9 | PDF – Narrative, Map, Images | Annex 7: Levuka Heritage Register | National Trust of Fiji | 3 Maáfu Street, <u>SUVA</u> Ph: (679) 3301807 |
| 10 | PDF –Map | Annex 8: Revised Levuka Town Planning Scheme Map | Department of Town & Country Planning | 1 st Floor F.F.A Building Gladstone Road <u>SUVA</u> Ph: (679) 3305336 |

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|----|----------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| 10 | PDF - document | Annex 9: Revised Levuka Town Planning Scheme Provisions | Department of Town & Country Planning | 1 st Floor F.F.A Building Gladstone Road SUVA Ph: (679) 3305336 |
| 10 | PDF - document | Annex 10: Revised Levuka Town Planning Scheme Statement | Department of Town & Country Planning | 1 st Floor F.F.A Building Gladstone Road SUVA Ph: (679) 3305336 |