

Erbil Citadel (Iraq) (C1437)

Executive Summary

This interim report provides an update in relation to the matters raised by the World Heritage Committee in Decision 38 COM 8B.20 regarding the inscription of Erbil Citadel on the World Heritage List with particular regard to Point 5 (c) of the Decision relating to the proposals for a new Kurdistan Museum (KM) and where this crosses over for direct archaeological reasons with Point 5 (a).

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Governor of Erbil, acting as 'State Party', recognise the importance of engaging with the World Heritage Committee (WHC) in relation to this extremely important proposal for the Kurdish people. The proposed KM project provides not only a world class museum from which the KRG will emphasise the rich history of the Kurdish people and engage with people to better reveal the significance and Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Erbil Citadel, but is also a tangible memorial and focus for national and international recognition of the victims of the Anfal genocide and the Halabja bombardment. The KRG has long been committed to appropriate recognition of these matters, continues the process of repatriation of victims' remains, and views the proposed KM project as an opportunity not only to enhance international understanding of our cultural heritage, but also to build a deserved monument of remembrance to the victims of the genocide.

For this reason we have set out below the steps we propose to undertake in terms of explaining the rationale behind, and Impact Assessment of, the proposed Museum to international standards, and would like to agree with you a process by which we can submit the results of these activities to the WHC for review and comment.

We would therefore ask you to review the proposals outlined below and set out a timetable and protocols through which we can engage with you directly to reach a mutually acceptable proposal for the new Museum.

The report also summarizes the very positive progress that has been made in maintaining the state of conservation of the World Heritage property since inscription through on-going repairs and maintenance. Reference is also made to aspirations to continue research to support Point 5 (a) which will also assist in the review and update as necessary the management plan and policies for the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage property by the High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalisation (HCECR).

Despite the acute problems of the on-going situation in the wider region regarding the activities of ISIS and their abhorrent disregard and wanton destruction visited on several internationally important sites of shared cultural heritage within Iraq, the KRG remains steadfast and committed to the protection of the Erbil Citadel World Heritage Site and the safety and stability of the region generally.

We appreciate the guidance, resources and support that the WHC may be able to offer us in terms of our on-going work to protect not only the Erbil Citadel but also the wider cultural heritage of the region and look forward to engaging with you on this and other relevant issues.

At present there are no new developments or projects within the World Heritage Site or its buffer zone that have the potential to impact adversely on the property. However, if this situation changes before 1 December 2015 the KRG or its representative organisations acting as State Party will notify the WHC and UNESCO at an early stage.