Old Town of Galle and its Fortifications (Sri Lanka) (C 451)

1. Executive Summary of the report

Galle fort and its fortifications, listed as a world Heritage property in 1988 and as per the Antiquities Ordinance, the rampars of the fort and some of the buildings inside were listed as Protected monuments in 1971. There are about 350 houses which are individually owned and institutional buildings, such as offices and religious buildings. There are Two Schools, one Buddhist Temple, Two churches and a mosque. The grid pattern road network represents the unique European architecture and the houses with front open varandas and central court yards represent Sri Lankan Traditional Architecture, creates the special Dual Parentage Heritage, that enhances the outstanding universal value of the property.

There are different government agencies work on different issues related to the property, such as Department of Archaeology, Urban Development Authority, Galle Municipal Council, Coast Conservation Department etc. To coordinate the inter departmental activities, Galle Heritage Foundation was established on the approval of the parliament in 1994.

There are different issues, specially regarding the development needs of the residents and other investors, that needs professional involvement. The planning sub committee consisted with the representation of all stakeholder parties, inspect and advice the developers and recommends the proposals for the final approval by the Municipal council. As per the World Hertiage Guidelines the management plan for the property is a requirement and it has been prepared and sent to the approval of the World heritage centre. When it is approved the activities within the property could be managed properly after the legal enactments.

A special buffer zone for the world heritage property was not identified at the inscription as there was already a buffer zone declared under the provisions of Antiquities Ordinance. It was decided that the same buffer zone is adequate to protect the outstanding universal value of the property, although there were proposals to extend it to cover the maritime archaeological remains. The proposal was studied in detail and understood that the maritime archaeological remains are protected under the legal provisions of the Antiquities ordinance, while those are not described as the attributes of the world Heritage Property.

The highest attention was paid to the development proposal for the harbour proposed by the Sri Lanka ports Authority. It was proposed to develop the existing harbour as a commercial harbour but the proposal was rejected and the developer agreed to scale down the project to a tourism harbour which enhances the world Property. Meanwhile an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) was carried out on the first proposal and it was clear that the development doesn’t damage the maritime archaeological remains and ensure the protection. A Heritage Impact Assessment was done in 2015 and the comments are being reviewed, and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority is waiting for the
approval for the project to commence with the funding provided by JAICA of Japan.

2. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

1. Acknowledges that the State Party has provided further information on the proposed Port project including cross sections and photo-montages, but regrets that these have not been submitted in sufficient detail to allow a full assessment of the potential impact of the proposed port on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property and also notes that a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) has not been undertaken as requested, with a technical study to ascertain potential impacts on the underwater archaeology;

A technical study on the Archaeological impacts on the maritime archaeological remains was done in 2007 by Ross Anderson, Jeremy Green and Coriolis Souter of Department of Maritime Archaeology of Western Australian Museum before the scaling down the harbour development. The Ports Authority ensures that the same technical assessment is still valid for the scaled down proposal as the construction area is minimised within the same footprint.
A Heritage Impact Assessment was carried out in early 2015, by Jane Thompson and Sara Court of Thompson Studios, Italy. The comments and observations of the HIA were reviewed by the Department of Archaeology and Sri Lanka Ports Authority and have been submitted to the UNESCO as the annexure II. Therefore, the AIA and HIA requirements are fulfilled.

2. Encourages the State Party to invite an ICOMOS advisory mission to the property, to be financed by the State Party, in order to consider the potential impact of the Port project, and requests the State Party, in advance of such a mission, to provide large scale plans, photo-montages of a high resolution, and to have made progress on a HIA and technical underwater archaeological studies;

It is planned to invite to an ICOMOS advisory mission after getting the final approval for the port development project, and when the project commenced. Sri Lanka Ports Authority wishes to sponsor the mission. The AIA and HIA reports and the required large scale plans, photo- montages can be presented to the ICOMOS Mission.

3. Expresses its concern that the State Party’s report has only addressed the Port and has not responded to other requests of the World Heritage Committee;

The other issues; the Buffer zone and Management plan have been already finalized. It took considerable time as there were some issues to be resolved in the ground level. There may be certain amendments to the buffer zone and management plan while in implementation.

4. Reiterates its request to the State Party to formally submit the proposals for the revision of the buffer zone and reiterates its encouragement to the State Party to consider an extension of the property to cover the maritime archaeology of the bay;