Višegrad Bridge (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

No. 1260

Official name as proposed by the State Party: Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge in Višegrad

Location: Republic of Srpska, Sarajevo Macro Region

Brief description:

The Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge of Višegrad is a masonry structure constructed across the Drina River at the end of the 16th century. Built by the court architect Sinan on the order of the Grand Vizier Mehmed Paša Sokolović, it is characteristic of the apogee of Ottoman monumental architecture and civil engineering.

It has eleven masonry arches, with spans ranging from 11 to 15 metres, and an access ramp at right angles with four arches on the left bank of the river.

Category of property:

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, it is a monument.

1. IDENTIFICATION

Included in the Tentative List: 18 January 2006

International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination: No

Date received by the World Heritage Centre: 31 January 2006

Background: This is a new nomination.

Consultations: ICOMOS have consulted the TICCIH.

Literature consulted (selection):


Commission for the preservation of national monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, European Community and Council of Europe (Plan for the implementation of integrated rehabilitation projects, evaluation of the architectural and archaeological heritage [IRPP/SAAH programme]), Preliminary technical studies of the Plan for the implementation of integrated rehabilitation projects. [PTA, Višegrad Bridge], Sarajevo, 31 August 2005.


Additional information requested and received from the State Party: ICOMOS sent a letter to the State Party on 31 January 2007 requesting additional information, and the State Party provided additional information on 27 and 28 February 2007.

Date of approval of this report: 11 March 2007

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The Drina is a powerful mountain river which, near to Višegrad, passes through many gorges. In the river’s course from the south towards the north, it drains water from the mountains of the Balkans towards the Sava and the Danube. This region was over a long period part of the North-Eastern Ottoman Empire, from the early 16th century to the end of the 19th century, as opposed to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Furthermore, the Drina forms the border with Serbia downstream from the bridge close to Višegrad.

The bridge stands just after a sharp curve in the river. The plain which opens out on the right bank enabled the development of the town of Višegrad, at the level of the bridge, but primarily downstream from it, at the confluence with a small tributary of the Drina.

The left bank consists of a rocky hill just next to the river and thus to the bridge. This geographical situation required the construction of a 120 metre access ramp along the river. The ramp is thus laid out at right angles to the bridge itself, and forms a direct architectural extension of the bridge. The ramp provides road access to the bridge, on the river bank, and then elevates the roadway on the ramp supported by four small arches.

The bridge itself is some 179.50 m long, with a total roadway width of 7.20 m, including the parapets consisting of large stone blocks 60 cm thick. The central part of the structure is the highest, and is situated 15.40 m above the average water level, which contributes greatly to the monumental impression of the bridge as a whole.
The bridge consists of eleven slightly ogival arches, whose dimensions range from 10.70 m to around 15 m. The piers are some 3.90 m thick. The arches are enhanced by architectural features which are typical of the classical Ottoman period: hollow ribs on the arches, and triangular pier-heads surmounted by pyramids, and rounded downstream cutwaters surmounted by tapered cones, underlining of the roadway by its cantilever layout, architectural treatment of the spandrels and mihrab by hollowed panels forming niches.

At the central pier, the passageway is widened, with on one side a wall bearing engraved inscriptions celebrating the bridge and its creators (mihrab), while on the other side there is a stone divan.

The historic foundations consist of wooden foundation rafts reinforced with wooden piles and stone blocks. The piers and the whole structure are in masonry, using dressed travertine calcareous rock from local quarries and binders enriched with clay to enhance their hydraulic properties.

Despite its uniform external appearance, the bridge has undergone a large number of interventions and reconstructions over the course of time.

**History and development**

The Višegrad Bridge was commissioned by the Grand Vizier Mehmed Paša Sokolović (1505-1579), who exercised power over a long period at the summit of the Ottoman Empire during the reign of three sultans. The commissioning of the bridge was primarily a tribute to his native region. Founding edifices of this sort, which were both religious and social, formed part of the traditions of power, which expressed itself through major architectural creations which thus reinforced its symbolic nature and its image of civil and religious power.

The Višegrad Bridge was secondly a major structure in terms of planning and control of the inland Balkans by the Ottoman Empire from Istanbul. It thus forms a highlight of the route linking the plains of the Danube to Sarajevo and the Adriatic coast, particularly to the free port of Ragusa (Dubrovnik). The period of its construction coincided with the apogee of the Ottoman Empire, following the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566). This was a long period of peace and prosperity for the region.

The great court architect and engineer Koca Mimar Sinan, who was the head of the team of architects of the Empire, was called on to design and construct the bridge. He had already built, on behalf of Mehmed Paša Sokolović, several major civil and religious architectural works: mosques, bridges, civil constructions, in Istanbul and in several regions of the Empire. Sinan is an emblematic representative of the classical architectural creation of the Ottoman Empire at its apogee. The Višegrad Bridge was constructed from 1571 to 1577, and substantial human and financial resources were employed in the task.

For two and a half centuries, the solidly built bridge suffered primarily from flooding. There are records of works in 1625 and then in 1875 on the piers. The exceptional flooding of 1896 submerged it entirely, resulting in serious damage. The piers were shaken and eroded, and the parapets were washed away. The bridge was not however destroyed. In 1911-1912, extensive works were carried out to stabilise and reinforce the piers by Austro-Hungarian engineers (piers 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9). At that time the bridge was strategically important in military terms, being located at the frontier with Serbia. The installation of a new thicker stone parapet brought a change to the visible parts of the bridge.

During World War I, in 1914-1915, piers 3 and 4 were blown up with dynamite. After the war, a provisional repair was carried out using steel girders supported by the remaining parts of the initial bridge. The reconstruction in stone, following the original design, was carried out in 1939-1940.

During World War II, in 1943, five of the bridge’s arches were completely destroyed, affecting piers 3, 4, 5 and 6. The arches destroyed were rebuilt by the Ministry of Communication and the Roads Administration, between 1950 and 1952, following the model of the parts still intact.

The most recent period has been marked by the construction of the Bajina Basta power station downstream (1966), and by that of the Višegrad power station upstream, some 2.5 km away (1989). These two constructions on the Drina, relatively close to the bridge, have profoundly modified the hydraulic rate of flow of the river (see chapter 4 and 5). In terms of bridge maintenance, the main event was, from 1980 to 1982, an analysis of the bridge and then the launch of restoration work on the foundations of piers 5, 6 and 8. Unfortunately, this work remained uncompleted, because of a lack of funds. The same is true of the work on pier 2, begun in 1992 and not completed.

The war of 1992-1995 had no direct impact on the Višegrad Bridge.

The access ramp on the left bank was restored in 1991, in a spirit of respect for the heritage.

In 2003, vehicle traffic was prohibited, because of the structural risks arising from the state of the bridge (see chapter 4 and 5). In 1986 a modern bridge was built about 1 km downstream, duplicating the function of the historic bridge.

Since the exceptional flooding of 1896 and the damage during the wars of the 20th century, the bridge has undergone a succession of repairs and reconstructions, with the two last campaigns of works unfortunately remaining uncompleted. The resulting structural fragility has been increased by changes in the rate of flow of the Drina, as a result of the construction of the hydroelectric power plants and their management.

### 3. OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE, INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY

**Integrity and authenticity**

**Integrity**

Since the exceptional flooding of 1896 and the damage during the wars of the 20th century, the bridge has undergone a succession of repairs and reconstructions, with the two last campaigns of works unfortunately remaining uncompleted. The resulting structural fragility has been increased by changes in the rate of flow of the Drina, as a result of the construction of the hydroelectric power plants and their management.
The Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge of Višegrad has retained its overall architectural style, despite the assaults and destructions it has undergone in the course of its history. All the works undertaken have been carried out while respecting its general integrity. All the elements which confer on the bridge its outstanding value are present in the bridge as it is today, and this includes the materials and architectural details. If the integrity of the property has been altered, it is essentially as a result of inevitable changes in its environment and by changes in the buildings in the town, and more widely by the changing lifestyles of people. These modifications are considered to be external to the property itself and of slight heritage significance. There is however one point which is an exception: the considerable raising of the river water level by the hydroelectric power station of Bajina Basta in Serbia. The general appearance of the bridge is thus less majestic than it was originally. Apart from this, the image of “the bridge over the Drina” remains intact from the cultural and literary heritage viewpoint.

Traces of external calcification are affecting the walls of the spandrels of the bridge. Underwater observations of the base of the piers reveals marked undermining. The road has been resurfaced and does not correspond to the original roadway.

ICOMOS considers that the present integrity of the property has good overall coherence, enabling it to express the universal values which it embodies. This fundamental point is unquestionable. However, this integrity today seems to be fragile in the extreme. The property is suffering from the legacy of complex historical developments which have affected it for a little over a century (see chapter 2). The situation is far from satisfactory, and has not even been stabilised. The PTA report of 2005 (see bibliography) considers there is an urgent need of repair for all the piers and their foundations. The priority is said to be extremely urgent for piers 3 and 7. These points could call into question the expression of the universal values which the bridge embodies, and indeed its very existence.

ICOMOS also considers that the integrity of the property, intrinsically fragile, is facing other pressures:

- The water level, which has been raised by about 2 metres, and the existence of currents linked to the present use of the hydroelectric power plants upstream and downstream of the bridge, increase the undermining already observed at the base of the piers;
- A plan to stabilise the river banks upstream of the bridge does not as yet guarantee the future of the landscape environment close to the property;
- The possibility of new constructions close to the property, on the right bank, with no relation to the property and its historical environment.

**Authenticity**

The authenticity of the property is analysed in the light of the Nara document. The authenticity seems excellent, in the classical Ottoman style. The bridge was designed and built from the drawings of Mimar Koca Sinan, an architect then at the summit of his art, considered an emblematic figure of the architectural ability of the Ottoman Empire, which was then at its apogee. The unique elegance of the proportions and the monumental nobility of the property as a whole bear witness to this fact. However, the original documents relating to the construction and the worksites have not been conserved.

Alterations to the bridge over the course of its history have been minor or temporary, such as the construction of wooden towers in the 19th century for the toll. The main alteration to its form consists of modifications of the parapet, in two stages. The elegant original parapet of fine stone slabs, washed away by the flooding in 1896, was initially replaced by large dressed stones, and then again in 1949 by a stone parapet 60 cm thick.

In terms of materials, the same dressed travertine calcareous stone from the Banja quarries, in the vicinity of the bridge, has always been used for repairs and reconstructions. Its resistance to both water and air are excellent. Non-authentic materials were used in the foundations in 20th century restorations, particularly concrete. These parts are not directly visible.

ICOMOS considers that the recent history of the bridge has considerably reduced the parts of the bridge which are genuinely authentic, but the reconstructions and restorations have globally been faithful to the original construction. The main questions of authenticity are related to:

- The parapets, whose inelegant forms are very different from the original;
- The restoration of the interior of the piers in 1950-1952 with concrete (probably reinforced);
- The use of modern binders in the masonry joints that do not have the appearance of the old binders;
- The current roadway is not authentic; it has been laid on top of the original cobbled way which remains buried in certain parts of the bridge.

One remark should be made however: the documentation on the materials, application and appearance of the old works is extremely minimal, and is often linked to later observations made when rehabilitation work was carried out in the 20th century.

ICOMOS considers that the current integrity of the property is an appropriate expression of the universal values which it embodies.

ICOMOS considers the authenticity of the property as a whole to have been sufficiently maintained in the course of successive restorations made necessary by its extremely eventful history. The visible alterations to form and material are secondary, and can be put right by appropriate restorations.
Comparative analysis

The Višegrad Bridge is one of the major historic edifices of the Balkans and the South-East of Europe. In stylistic terms, it is emblematic of the Classical Ottoman period of the 16th century, and it offers parallels with the bridges of the Renaissance. The construction and assembly details are similar. Like the Renaissance bridges, it bears witness to the long duration of the influences of Roman antiquity on bridge building in Europe and the Middle East. The Višegrad Bridge is exactly contemporaneous with the Santa Trinita Bridge in Florence, whose elliptical segmental arches are however the result of a different technical and architectural choice.

The ogival arch seen on the Višegrad Bridge and on the major bridges of the classical Ottoman period, also bears witness to wide zones of architectural influence, in both time and space, from the Middle East to the Medieval Gothic of Western Europe. Moreover, the structural refinement and the architectural and technical mastery (particularly of its pier-heads and downstream cutwaters) used on the Višegrad Bridge are one of the greatest successes in the history of masonry bridges, and are in particular comparable with the most elegant French bridges.

Sinan moreover designed eight other bridges or aqueducts with several arches, in the classical Ottoman style of the Višegrad Bridge (including the Büyükçekmece Bridge in Istanbul, and the bridges of Silivri and Marica in Bulgaria) together with very large mosques (Azapkapiye, Sofia, Edirne) and architectural ensembles (Lüleburgaz, Kardiga, Edirne). Mehmed Paša Sokolović for his part commissioned other bridges in the Balkans (Trebinje in Bosnia, Podgorica in Montenegro). Other classical Ottoman bridges have also been built in Bosnia, such as the single arch Mostar Bridge (1566) and the bridge over the River Zepa. The Mostar Bridge was destroyed in 1993, but was rebuilt in 2004, and is inscribed on the World Heritage List.

The central mihrab and the divan are also characteristic elements of the style, giving a high symbolic and metaphysical value to the central part of the bridge, above the water. The mihrab is also found on other bridges in the Balkans.

The Višegrad Bridge would seem to be the most consummate example, and the best conserved in a state of authenticity to bear witness to the classical Ottoman period.

ICOMOS considers that the prestige and importance of Sinan in the history of world architecture and civil engineering should be emphasised. His action has also been recognised by UNESCO World Heritage Committee, for the urban landscape of Istanbul, and will probably also be recognised again for his hydraulic works and aqueducts.

The link with the Italian Renaissance is relevant, as Sinan had notable contacts with the Western world, and it bears witness to cultural exchanges between the East and West, between the Islamic world and the Christian world.

The ancient sources of the work of Sinan are of course based on his direct observation of the Roman heritage, in the East and in the West. He also found inspiration in Iranian and Seljuk architectural traditions.

Justification of the Outstanding Universal Value

The State Party considers that the Višegrad Bridge is one of the most impressive in the world, in terms of its situation, its technical design and its architectural forms. The bridge’s qualities and solidity have enabled it to withstand the challenges of history and changes in its environment.

Its creator, Mimar Koca Sinan, is the most famous of all architects of the Ottoman Empire, and one of the greatest in the world. It is one of his major constructions and represents the a real model of bridge building. The overall architectural form, the sequence of the eleven slightly ogival arches over the Drina and the lateral access ramp make it a unique ensemble. An ensemble which has come down to us today in authentic architectural forms.

The bridge in particular bears witness to three great historical figures: the man who commissioned it, the Grand Vizier Mehmed Paša Sokolović; its designer, the Empire’s leading architect and engineer, Sinan; and its biographer, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Ivo Andrić, for his book The Bridge over the Drina.

The edifice of Višegrad is a symbol of the many functions of the bridge, linking men and spaces which are different and distant from each other. It is also a symbolic link between the past and the present, and has inspired many literary and artistic works.

The bridge bears witness to a major period in the history of the Ottoman Empire, which was then at the height of its power and glory. Many Bosnians then occupied important functions in the administration of the Empire, notably the Grand Vizier Mehmed Paša Sokolović. The most famous bridge of the Empire was built on his order, close to his native village.

The Višegrad Bridge embodies the traditions, poetry, literature and art of Bosnia and Herzegovina more than any other monument. It has always been considered by the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an extremely precious heritage.

ICOMOS considers that the universal value of the bridge at Višegrad is unquestionable for all the historical reasons and in view of the architectural values already mentioned. It represents a major stage in the history of civil
engineering and bridge architecture, by one of the most celebrated builders of the Ottoman Empire.

The bridge particularly bears witness to the transmission and adaptation of techniques in the course of a long historical process. It also bears witness to important cultural exchanges between areas of different civilisations. It is an exceptional representative of Ottoman architecture and civil engineering at its classical apogee. Its symbolic role has been important down the course of history, and particularly in the many conflicts that took place in the 20th century. Its cultural value transcends both national and cultural borders.

The outstanding universal value of the property is recognised; it is however in danger, in view of the threats hanging over the bridge.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of criteria i, ii, iv and vi:

Criterion i: The Višegrad Bridge is a masterpiece of human creative genius in its design and construction. It was built by an exceptional architect, Sinan, and commissioned by Mehmed Paša Sokolović in the 16th century. It constitutes a remarkable architectural type with remarkably designed architectonic forms.

ICOMOS recognises that the Višegrad Bridge represents a remarkable architectural type and that its architectonic forms are extremely graceful. However, the bridge should be considered more as a particularly successful evidence of the use of a set of existing techniques, in a difficult site, rather than as a masterpiece of human creative genius, in the sense given to this expression by the World Heritage Convention.

ICOMOS considers that criterion i has not been justified.

Criterion ii: Located in a position of geostrategic importance, the bridge bears witness to important cultural exchanges between the Balkans, the Ottoman Empire and the Mediterranean world, between Christianity and Islam, over the long course of history. The management of the bridge and repairs made to it have also involved different political and cultural powers: after the Ottomans came the Austro-Hungarians, the Yugoslavian Federation, and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The question of the identity of the inhabitants of the region is complex, in view of the close proximity of Serbia.

ICOMOS considers that criterion ii is justified.

Criterion iv: The Višegrad Bridge is a remarkable architectural testimony to the apogee of the classical age of the Ottoman Empire, whose values and achievements mark an important stage in the history of mankind.

ICOMOS considers that criterion iv is justified.

Criterion vi: The Višegrad Bridge has given rise to major folklore, literary and artistic traditions, first amongst which is the literary work of Ivo Andrić, the biographer of the bridge and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature. Many legends have been associated with the building of the bridge, from its origins. Many travellers have also born literary witness to the bridge.

ICOMOS considers that only the literary work of Ivo Andrić can be considered to have international recognition, as the other data are frequently encountered in the case of many bridges, and are of regional or national significance.

ICOMOS considers that criterion vi has not been justified.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the Outstanding Universal Value has been demonstrated and that the nominated property meets criteria ii and iv.

4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY

Industrial impact is considered to be very low up to now. Large industrial projects are planned by the local authorities, but they are located well away from the core zone of the property. Real estate development impact is considered to be under control in view of the buffer zone proposed.

Other impacts need to be considered in the future: new infrastructures should be set up in order to dedicate the historic bridge zone to tourism. Another bridge over the Drina should one day link up the two parts of the town.

Taking into account the situation of the property in a zone with a temperate continental climate, the climatic conditions and their effects are well known. They require the moderate use of salt in winter to provide safer traffic conditions in the event of freezing. The bridge must be regularly maintained and cleaned. The water of the Drina is of good quality and has good biological diversity. The air is of very good quality. The management plan includes surveillance of the water and air.

The most important natural threat is the scale of the flooding of the Drina. Some very exceptional flooding, as in 1896, could cause major damage to the bridge. The three dams built on the Drina can serve as regulators. A concerted emergency plan in the event of flooding has been proposed to the power stations, in order to limit the effects of flooding as far as possible.

The impact of the Bajina Basta hydroelectric power station, situated downstream of the bridge, in Serbia-Montenegro, is considered to be important in its effects of raising the average water level and undermining piers. The piers are already fragile. The average level of the water is raised by about two metres by the power station downstream, or more, and the levels often vary considerably. However the threat to the piers and their foundations also stem from the downstream dam. Substantial currents are generated when the water level is lowered, resulting in serious undermining of the pier bases.

Tourism has no significant impact on the bridge, and may be developed. The town of Višegrad in particular wishes to encourage tourism.
ICOMOS considers that there are threats to the bridge’s environment from real estate, particularly from possible urban building or reconstruction on the right bank, just next to the bridge.

The restructuring of the river banks upstream of the bridge, which is linked to the Višegrad power station dam, could cause a major modification to the landscape of the environment close to the property if appropriate measures are not taken.

ICOMOS considers that the main risks threatening the very existence of the property are linked to the uncontrolled use of the two dams on either side of the bridge, upstream and downstream on the River Drina. ICOMOS recommends that particular attention should be given to this question very rapidly, both at the level of the local authorities, and at the level of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska, in conjunction with the Serbian authorities responsible for water management.

5. PROTECTION, CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

The nominated property consists of the bridge, its access ramp on the left bank, the river banks immediately upstream and downstream of the bridge on both sides, over some 100 metres, and a small rectangular space where the bridge roadway reaches the right bank.

The buffer zone covers a quite large area of the hill on the left bank, extending the protected riverbanks upstream and downstream. The buffer zone on the right bank, alongside the town of Višegrad, which did not appear in the initial dossier, has been created following exchanges of correspondence between ICOMOS and the State Party.

ICOMOS considers that the core zone setting out the boundaries of the property and its immediate surroundings is appropriately defined. The buffer zone, in its latest version including a protection zone on the right bank, is in line with ICOMOS’ expectations. It should enable satisfactory protection of the site and the expression of its outstanding universal value.

Ownership

The bridge is the property of the government.

The buffer zone includes private properties.

Protection

The Višegrad Bridge is placed under the protection of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina (order 1099/1951) and is inscribed on the List of inalienable cultural monuments (order 02-741-3/1962).

The Institute for the protection of the cultural, historic and natural environment, created in 1989, stipulated in 1990 that the Višegrad Bridge was a category 1 cultural and historic heritage property, subject in particular to the heritage protection law of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2002, the property was listed in category 0, as being of international interest.

In 2003, the National Commission for the Preservation of Monuments raised it to the status of a national monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It can as such benefit from the provisions of the law applying decisions on the protection of national monuments (Republic of Srpska 9/02). Any management decision not complying with the provisions of this law is revocable.

In addition to this framework law, the bridge and its management are protected by the law on cultural properties (1995), the criminal law of the Republic of Srpska (2000) and the law on land management (2002).

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection measures are adequate in themselves, but that they must be strengthened by urgent contractual regulatory measures for the management of the hydraulic environment of the property. The application levels should be clearly established.

ICOMOS considers that there are threats to the bridge’s environment from real estate, particularly from possible urban building or reconstruction on the right bank, just next to the bridge.

Conservation

In chapter 2 we examined the history of the conservation of the property and its transmission up to the present day. Note the conclusion of this analysis: “Since the exceptional flooding of 1896 and the damage during the wars of the 20th century, the bridge has undergone a succession of repairs and reconstructions, with the two last campaigns of works unfortunately remaining uncompleted. The resulting structural fragility has been increased by changes in the rate of flow of the Drina, as a result of the construction of the hydroelectric power plants and their management.”

Present state of conservation:

With regard to the integrity analysis and the factors affecting the property (see chapter 3 and 4), ICOMOS considers that the current state of conservation is inadequate to ensure the conservation of the property in a long-term perspective. The most critical point is the poor condition of the piers and the damaging forces to which they are subjected as a result of the many changes in water level linked to the control of the hydroelectric dams upstream and downstream of the bridge.

Active conservation measures:

The various legal protection decisions taken in the early 2000s have resulted in a growing awareness on the part of the public authorities. For the first time since the peace of 1996 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a budget of 250,000 Euros was allocated in 2005 by the government of the Republic of Srpska for the protection of the heritage and cultural properties, of which 20% has been earmarked for the Višegrad Bridge. It is planned that, in the future, some of the revenues from tourism, in the form of taxes, will be allocated to the conservation of the bridge.

A technical evaluation of the bridge was carried out, with international cooperation, and published in 2005 (PTA, see bibliography). In February 2007, the Višegrad Bridge was
inscribed on the list of priority interventions in the integrated regional programme for the rehabilitation of the cultural heritage of the Council of Europe. The competent authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina will also be assisted by the Turkish Office of International Cooperation and Development (TIKA) for preliminary technical studies.

The coordinated international management of the waters of the Drina has been undertaken at various levels. A water and flooding management master plan has thus been put in place (December 2006) for the next four years by the regional authority of the Republic of Srpska.

Public information and awareness raising actions have been undertaken.

ICOMOS considers that the uncompleted work of 1980-1982, and then of 1992, has left the structural bases of the bridge in a critical state, which has unfortunately been exacerbated by the present management of the river, which has been mentioned on several occasions. The joint study of 2005 confirms that this situation is critical. As a priority, the most urgent attention should be given to the restoration of the piers, of their foundations and the management of the water level of the Drina.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

The setting up of management measures is the responsibility of the Republic of Srpska. It is in charge of the rehabilitation of the national monuments on its territory. Its decisions are implemented by the Institute for protection of the cultural, historic and natural heritage. The minister of urban development and public works is responsible for protection measurements linked to the environment and to the management of water, in conjunction with the municipal authorities.

ICOMOS notes that the executive role for the management of the property and its environment is the responsibility of the Republic of Srpska.

Management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

The National Commission for the preservation of monuments sets out the framework for the scientific conformity of all actions relating to preservation and the implementation of the management plan.

In 2005, the programme of preliminary studies formed the first stage of a concerted management plan. As already indicated, it demonstrated the very poor technical situation of the bridge.

The management plan linked to the World Heritage nomination was then drawn up under the guidance of the National Commission for the preservation of monuments and the municipality of Višegrad. Its main points are:

- To set objectives for the management of the bridge in relation to its environment, in order to conserve and improve its outstanding universal value.
- To propose a long-term and balanced approach for future management, taking into account the conservation of the bridge, the development of its environment and the expansion of tourism.
- To identify the level of research necessary for the future management of the property.
- To increase public interest in the bridge, and to promote its cultural and educational values.
- To identify strategies for social and economic development in the environment of the bridge. To contribute to encouraging the return of families driven out by the war of 1992-1996.
- To establish the priorities of a bridge heritage management action programme.

The management plan also includes surveillance of the use of the dams and measures to ease the impact of changing water levels on the bridge structures. The international cooperation necessary for water management is carried out at the level of the governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, in particular through the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The two parties are considering the setting up of a programme for the protection of the Višegrad Bridge, in order to improve and then eliminate the negative impact of the hydroelectric power stations on the bridge.

Studies have been proposed for the harmonious conservation of the river banks upstream of the bridge.

ICOMOS considers that the Commission of preservation is carrying out work of good quality, and that it is very important for the future of the Višegrad Bridge, and for an understanding of its significance and of its outstanding universal value. Its work has been done in a spirit of cooperation and long-term vision which deserves the highest praise.

ICOMOS considers that the involvement of the regional authorities of the Republic of Srpska in the heritage management and legal protection of the bridge must be increased.

ICOMOS considers it imperative that concerted management of the waters of the Drina should be set up as quickly as possible, in order to protect the bridge. This is an essential element of the management plan.

ICOMOS considers that the State Party must as a matter of urgency restore the foundations of the bridge, and then ensure satisfactory conservation of the edifice and its environment.

Involvement of local communities

The municipality of Višegrad is involved in the management plan, and played an active part in drawing it up. In 2006, the municipality committed funds for the setting up of the management plan, in particular for the operations of the Technical Commission of the bridge.
ICOMOS considers that the efforts of the municipality are essential for the future of the bridge and the expression of its outstanding universal value. However, the bridge must not be considered solely as a tourist attraction which will benefit the commercial economy of the town and the region.

Resources, including staffing levels, expertise and training

The human resources used for the conservation and management of the bridge consist of:

- The National Commission for the preservation of monuments and the personnel of the integrated regional programme of the Council of Europe;
- The Institute for the protection of the cultural, historic and natural heritage of the Republic of Srpska;
- The architecture, town planning and civil engineering faculties of the universities of Sarajevo and Banja Luka;
- The technical personnel of the municipality of Višegrad.

The personnel of the Institute and the civil engineering faculties have been called on to draw up the project for the repair of the piers and the foundations of the bridge.

ICOMOS considers that the implementation of the management plan, including the concerted work of the various partners, is the central instrument of long-term protection.

However, ICOMOS considers that the executive commission for the management of the bridge has not really been constituted up to now. Its means of action do not seem sufficiently guaranteed, in financial terms, in terms of the devolution of power to the commission, or in terms of competent full-time staff.

ICOMOS considers that the initial uncertainties about the implementation of the management plan have only been partially cleared up by the concertation actions recently planned for the management and control of the waters. The same applies to the urgent repair of the bridge and its technical protection in the long term.

In conclusion, ICOMOS stresses:

- the urgency of the interventions required on the foundations;
- the need for concerted and permanent management of water levels in the Drina in order to respect the authenticity and integrity of the property;
- the need to clarify and specify the legal and technical roles to be played by the various actors involved in management;
- the need for an executive commission which has the approval of all the parties involved, and which has guaranteed financial and human resources.

6. MONITORING

A detailed surveillance plan is proposed in the management plan, consisting of a regular (normally annual) inspection of the various parts of the bridge and monitoring of its overall stability. The Institute of heritage protection of the Republic of Srpska and the departments of the municipality of Višegrad are in charge of these surveillance tasks.

The control of the level and the control of the quality of the water are also included in the management plan.

The bridge commission gathers the results and analyses them; it regularly submits a report to the National Commission of Monuments.

ICOMOS considers that the surveillance plan has been appropriately prepared, and that it is based on substantial technical documentation describing the state of the property in the 20th century; the plan should therefore enable monitoring of the authenticity and the conservation of the bridge’s universal value.

ICOMOS recommends that the plan should be implemented in the framework of a strengthened Executive Commission of the bridge.

ICOMOS recommends that monitoring indicator observation frequency should be stepped up, and in particular the setting up of a concerted programme for the continuous management of the waters of the Drina in conjunction with the nearby hydroelectric power stations.

7. CONCLUSIONS

ICOMOS considers that the setting up of an extended buffer zone on the right bank of the Drina, as proposed in the annex accompanying the answer of the State Party of 27 February 2007, is satisfactory to ensure the future quality of the urban environment of the Višegrad Bridge and enable it to express its authenticity and its outstanding universal value.

ICOMOS considers that the general objectives of the management plan and the additional guarantees given by the State Party are steps in the right direction. However, ICOMOS considers that the actions considered should be effectively organised and rapidly set up in order to enable an effective response to the urgent issues relating to the heritage management of the bridge and its restoration.

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recognises the outstanding universal value of the Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge in Višegrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina; however, ICOMOS recommends that the nomination be referred back to the State Party in order to allow it to:
• Carry out the urgent work of restoring the foundations and piers, and more generally the technical organisation of the structural reinforcement of the bridge and then of its restoration-conservation in the long term.

• Strengthen the concerted management of water levels by the power stations of Bajina Basta and Višegrad, from the viewpoint of: flooding management; the return of the water level to a level compatible with the expression of the outstanding universal values of the bridge; the integrity of the structural bases of the bridge, which are currently being affected by the management of the dams.

• Carry out studies aimed at the harmonious preservation of the river banks upstream of the bridge.

• Clarify and specify the legal and technical roles of the various management actors. ICOMOS recommends in particular the rapid setting up of an Executive Commission for the management of the bridge, provided with guaranteed and significant financial, administrative and human resources.

• Plan for the ultimate replacement of the current parapets, which are heavy and do not conform to the original, by fine stone slabs, matching the documentation of the ancient bridge, prior to the flooding of 1896.
Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property
The bridge

Details of the mihrab