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# Shahr-i Sokhta (Islamic Republic of Iran) No 1456

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## Official name as proposed by the State Party

Shahr-i Sokhta

## Location

Sistan-o Baluchistan Province  
South-east Iran  
Islamic Republic of Iran

## Brief description

Located at the junction of Bronze Age trade routes crossing the Iranian plateau, the remains of the mud brick city of Shahr-i Sokhta represent the emergence of the first complex societies in eastern Iran. Founded around 3200 BCE, the city was populated during four main periods up to 1800 BCE, during which time there developed several distinct areas within the city. These include a monumental area, residential areas, industrial zones and a graveyard. Changes in water courses and climate change led to the eventual abandonment of the city in the early second millennium. The structures, burial grounds and large number of significant artefacts unearthed there and their well-preserved state due to the dry desert climate make this site a rich source of information regarding the emergence of complex societies and contacts between them in the third millennium BCE.

## Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*.

## 1 Basic data

### Included in the Tentative List

9 August 2007

### International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination

None

### Date received by the World Heritage Centre

1 February 2013

## Background

This is a new nomination.

## Consultations

ICOMOS consulted its International Scientific Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management and several independent experts.

## Technical Evaluation Mission

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 6 to 10 November 2013.

## Additional information requested and received from the State Party

A letter was sent to the State Party on 25 September 2013 requesting additional information about the Craftsmen's quarters and the property's boundary location. A reply was received on 24 October 2013 and the information has been incorporated below.

## Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

6 March 2014

## 2 The property

### Description

Shahr-i Sokhta meaning 'Burnt City' was named by the local people during the past 200 years for the traces of ash and fire which can be seen at the site. Located in a desert environment on a hill rising 19m above the surrounding lands, the actual city area within the property boundary is 151 ha. The city area is covered by fragments of pottery and stone artefacts held in the hardened surface matrix and exposed by wind erosion. This surface unites the various excavated zones into a single archaeological site. The property area is 275 ha surrounded by a buffer zone of 2,200 ha. The city is laid out with a north-west axis and is approximately 2,220 m long and 1,090 m wide; said to be the largest proto-historic human settlement in the Eastern Iranian Plateau. Within this the mud brick buildings are found in several excavated areas:

Eastern residential area – occupied 3200-2300 BCE

A number of courtyard houses arranged along alleyways have been excavated here. Each building unit had 6-8 rooms with covered and open areas for cooking, animal husbandry and in some cases, craft activities. Features include doors, thresholds, stairs, floors, ceilings fireplaces and animal troughs. Finds include thousands of human and animal figurines.

Central quarters – occupied from 3000-2500 BCE

This area is located in the centre of the site, north-west of the eastern residential area about 300m away and across a small valley. It comprises a large building complex with thick outer walls enclosing an area of 5,000 sq m. The building contains residential rooms around a central courtyard and was built in two consecutive construction periods, the second period overlaying the first and stretching further south. Both phases contained a great number of human and animal figurines, similar to the ones discovered in the eastern residential area.

Monumental area with memorial buildings – 2800-2500 BCE

Located in the north-western part of the site this area has so far been excavated to reveal a building of 1,600 sq m

with more than 93 rooms, of which the largest is 28 sq m. The main walls are built of very strong adobe up to 125 cm thick. Finds include ceramic and stone vessels; ritual objects such as human and animal figurines made of clay or terracotta similar to those found in the eastern residential and central quarters; flat stamp seals, cylindrical seals; disc-like objects made of baked clay; pieces of reed baskets; cloth; wooden combs and stone and metal objects and moulds. The figurines indicate cultural links with distant regions including Central Asia and Baluchistan. Some finds also relate to the later period (2500-2300 BCE).

#### North-western industrial area – 2800-2500 BCE

Separated from the other areas by small valleys this area is located at the north-western corner of the city and has an area of 6 ha. Excavations in 1972 uncovered workshops for the manufacture of beads made of lapis lazuli, agate and other semi-precious stones. Comparison with lapis lazuli items found in the Royal Cemetery at Ur indicates that the Shahr-i Sokhta workshops supplied the stone obtained from Badakhshan in a semi-finished state to Mesopotamia.

#### Southern industrial area

Another industrial area has been identified to the south. Surface surveys indicate that stone tools were made of flint in this area.

#### Southern area including Kakh-i Sokhta (Burnt Building) – 2300-1850 BCE

The large Burnt Building was excavated from 1969 and is currently the largest and latest building in the city being 560 sq m with 25 rooms. It was destroyed by fire as indicated by the name. There is also an adobe mastaba. It is thought that this building had two storeys because of the extremely thick walls of two to five rows of adobe and the presence of two staircases. It is thought to be a palace or public building.

#### Graveyard

The graveyard located at the south and south-western part of the site contains 20,000-37,000 graves, of which 680 have been excavated. It is thought that the cemetery may have extended further to the east and south-east but this area has been eroded by water in the past. The majority of the ten different types of grave are of the double or single pit type in which the body and grave objects were placed in the pit and covered with earth. These were used once or twice; some contained multiple bodies. Other grave types include the catacomb type which has a shaft leading to a blocked burial chamber in which the burial was preserved in an airless space, without contact with soil, and the pseudo catacomb type where the burial chamber was not blocked off. The catacomb graves represent 6% of those investigated and are thought to have belonged to the tribal chiefs on the basis of the grave objects found in them. Others are rectangular and square brick-lined graves, some with bricks lining only the two sides; circular brick-lined graves

and circular pits. Children were buried in a hole covered by a ceramic bowl. Important finds include a Jemdet Nasr type cylinder seal from the early third millennium BCE found in the only instance of a circular grave with a brick entrance; three dog skeletons in burial no. 1003; a skull found in burial no. 1003 which exhibits evidence of surgical treatment to relieve hydrocephalus and a semi-spherical object found in burial no. 6705 that has been identified as a prosthetic eye belonging to the tallest female found at the site (180 cm) and dating from 2900-2800 BCE. The 61 grave objects found in burial no. 731 include alabaster and pottery vessels including one decorated to create an animated effect as the vessel is turned; baskets, a wooden vessel and spoon, a metal seal and a wooden game board with its pieces. Mass burials in graves no. 609, 2301 and 1003 where the skulls are arranged in a circle around a central skeleton suggest some kind of human sacrifice. Food and beads made of semi-precious stones were also found in these burials. Pottery types exhibit a wide range of shape and decoration, but no kilns have been found so far.

In the wider excavation the remains of ceramic water or sewage pipes were found, laid to fall from the higher eastern part of the site in an east-west direction.

#### History and development

The settlement of Shahr-i Sokhta was founded c. 3200 BCE on the Biaban River, one of the branches of the now dry Hilmand River. At that time the proto-historic settlement was associated with a fertile plain irrigated by the Biaban. Subsequent changes in the water courses and climate change resulted in the abandonment of the city c. 1800 BCE. The city was located between two of the most important civilisations of the third millennium BCE: the Mesopotamians and the Elamites in the west and the Indus Valley civilisation in the east, at the junction of trade routes connecting them. According to the nomination dossier, the city was known in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but is yet to be identified in ancient texts.

Archaeological excavations at the site began in the 1960s under the auspices of the Italian Institute for Oriental Studies (IsMEO) working with the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research. Various scientific experts including geologists, paleobotanists, anthropologists, paleozoologists and nuclear physicists worked at the site to study all aspects of the large number of significant artefacts discovered there. The Islamic Revolution resulted in a break in the study of the site until 1997 when a survey and investigation program was instigated in the wider Sistan area by Iran's Cultural Heritage Organisation and the University of Sistan-o Baluchistan. Investigations undertaken up to 2009 have revealed four main settlement periods covering 1,200 years:

I. 3200-2800 BCE. The main settlements were the eastern residential and central areas covering 16 ha. Artefacts discovered including cylinder seals similar to the Jemdet Nasr period and Elam, a proto-Elamite tablet together with pottery similar to that of southern Central

Asia and Pakistan indicate that at this time the city was an economic and cultural crossroads.

II. 2800-2500 BCE. The city expanded towards the north-west beyond the central quarters to include the monumental area, reaching its largest size of 80 ha.

III. 2500-2300 BCE. This is a relatively unknown period due to lack of investigation in relevant parts of the site. Remains of the period have been identified in the central area, in the graveyard, and at RudBiaban Hill. The overall settlement area was 20 ha.

IV. 2300-1850 BCE. This is the period ascribed to the south and south-west parts of the city, including the Kakh-i Sokhta (Burnt Building), after which the site was abandoned.

### 3 Justification for inscription, integrity and authenticity

#### Comparative analysis

The nomination dossier includes a comparative analysis which compares Shahr-i Sokhta with other archaeologically well-known sites of the period in the region from Iraq/Mesopotamia in the west to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India in the east; Turkmenistan in the north, Tajikistan in the north-east and Oman in the south. Two main interaction spheres were identified in the Iranian plateau: the eastern Sistan area centred on Shahr-i Sokhta extended its influence north to Central Asia and east to the Quetta Valley, while the western 'Jemdat Nasr' sphere extended from Mesopotamia to Tepe Yahya in central Iran. Comparisons within these spheres based on the analysis of data from Tepe Yahya; Bampur in southern Iran; Moenjodaro, Pakistan (1980, (ii) and (iii)); Altyn Tepe, Turkmenistan; Sohr Damb/Nal in western Pakistan; Mundigak near Kandahar, Afghanistan, and Sarazm, Tajikistan (2010, (ii) and (iii)) indicate that Mundigak and Shahr-i Sokhta were the main proto-urban centres of the Hilmand culture on the Iran-Afghan border, with Shahr-i Sokhta being much larger and connected to trade routes across the plateau. It is proposed that Sarazm – a proto-urban metropolis with links into the Hindu Kush – was to the north-eastern extremity of the Iranian plateau what Shahr-i Sokhta was to the south-eastern extremity. It is concluded that Shahr-i Sokhta as the main centre of the Hilmand basin culture of Sistan in the third millennium BCE stands out in terms of its urban remains and artefacts and the interconnections they demonstrate with the wider region from Mesopotamia to the Indus Valley.

However ICOMOS notes that there is very little evidence in the nomination dossier to support this conclusion and the published reports by the archaeologists who excavated the site conclude that the trade was not large-scale and there was no centralisation of a trading network or centrally managed entrepreneurship. These reports consider that current evidence suggests that the carnelian and lapis lazuli production was for local consumption and conclude that the evidence overall suggests sporadic and

ephemeral trade contacts, rather than systematic, specialised forms of long-distance trade.

The archaeological remains are very well preserved due to the dry desert climate and the salt crusts up to 50 cm deep over the whole site. However ICOMOS notes a number of errors and speculative statements in the description and justification relating to Shahr-i Sokhta being the capital of the region, its ethnic diversity and later mythology.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property could have been compared with Harappa in the Indus Valley. However the planned town of Harappa is slightly later than Shahr-i Sokhta; its remains are less well-preserved, and contain modern reconstructions.

ICOMOS notes that the catacomb tombs at Shahr-i Sokhta bear strong similarities to those of the Central Asian tombs found at Zaman Baba and other locations. It has been suggested that together with the Geoksjurian pottery types this indicates a possible Turkmenistan origin for this burial tradition. ICOMOS also notes that to date only a very small area of the site has been excavated and that while graves at Ur and Shahr-i Sokhta have been found to contain identical sets of stone tools and semi-finished precious stones, it is not yet fully understood how the town relates to Mesopotamian centres beyond the lapis lazuli trade. The connection to the Indus Valley is limited to a few potsherds, and possibly stamp seals and gaming pieces. According to the nomination dossier the pipes (water or sewerage) found at Shahr-i Sokhta predate those at Moenjodaro but no conclusive evidence is provided.

ICOMOS considers that it is clear that Shahr-i Sokhta was a very large and important city within south-eastern Iran. The excavations and multi-disciplinary research since the 1960s have brought to light well-preserved evidence in the form of its mud-brick structures, burial grounds, workshops and artefacts that testify to its size, organisation, the source of its wealth and its trade and social structures. The site is a rich source of information regarding the emergence of complex societies and some contact between them in the third millennium BCE. However ICOMOS does not consider that Shahr-i Sokhta stands out in relation to comparable sites in the wider region beyond south-eastern Iran. Greater evidence of this kind and particularly trade contacts is evident at the world heritage listed proto-historic site of Sarazm.

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ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis does not justify consideration of this property for the World Heritage List at this stage.

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#### Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- It is the only city on the Iranian plateau containing remains of a transition from rural to urban life.

- Shahr-i Sokhta is evidence of the first complex societies in eastern Iran.
- The city provides information about adaptation to the difficult climate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE.
- It demonstrates the use of local and outside resources, connecting civilisations on the east and west and giving a unique picture of a proto-historic settlement.

ICOMOS considers that this justification is not appropriate because it focuses on the importance of Shahr-i Sokhta within the Iranian context. It is not supported by adequate evidence of the relationship with other civilisations and has not been shown to be an exemplar proto-historic settlement.

### **Integrity and authenticity**

#### **Integrity**

All elements necessary to express the property's values are included within the nominated area, which is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of features and processes which convey the property's significance. The property does not suffer from development or neglect. However the presence of the Zahedan-Zabol road and adjacent high-voltage power transmission line running past close to the site within the buffer zone has a negative impact. ICOMOS notes that there are proposals by the provincial government to move these further away from the site. ICOMOS considers that the sacrificial mud and straw plaster treatment (*Kahgel*) applied to preserve the excavated structures, while appropriate in itself detracts from the correct appreciation of the standing remains and the manner in which it is used could be improved. ICOMOS also considers that the protective roofs used over various parts of the excavations confuse understanding of the site and could be improved.

#### **Authenticity**

In general the surrounding desert landscape and extraordinary scatter of archaeological material present on the surface of the low hill of Shahr-i Sokhta give a strong sense of authenticity, as does the sight of the complex architecture of the various parts so far excavated. The labyrinthine succession of rooms, corridors and courtyards give a genuine impression of these ancient buildings. However ICOMOS notes that in some cases the indiscriminate use of the *Kahgel* plaster has resulted in blocked doorways, and the thick plaster makes all surfaces look the same and conceals the different architectural elements. The presentation of the cemetery is also confused by the way in which this plaster has been applied.

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In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity are vulnerable.

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### **Criteria under which inscription is proposed**

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (ii), (iii) and (iv).

Criterion (ii): *exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that Shahr-i Sokhta exhibits a transition from village habitation to an urbanised community with significant cultural, social and economic achievements and developments from the late Chalcolithic to the early Bronze Age. It served as a link between the civilisations of the Indus Valley and Mesopotamia.

ICOMOS considers that it is not fully understood how the nominated property relates to Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley. The cited evidence for the contacts is minimal.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified at this stage.

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Criterion (iii): *bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that Shahr-i Sokhta bears exceptional testimony to a civilisation and cultural tradition that linked trade and cultural relations with ancient sites and cultures in the Indus Plain, southern shores of the Persian Gulf, Makran Sea and south-west Iran, Mesopotamia and Central Asia. Archaeological remains and finds indicate the key role of the city on a very large scale in terms of working with metals, stone vessels, gems and pottery.

ICOMOS considers that as for criterion (ii) above, the cultural and trade links are not fully understood. However the evidence uncovered testifies to the way of life and death of the inhabitants. The mud-brick structures, burial grounds, and workshops are testimony to its size, organisation and social structures. Knowledge of the source of the city's wealth and trade has been enhanced by analysis of the artefacts and materials discovered which demonstrate the crafts that were practised and the origin of the materials used. However in relation to the criterion ICOMOS considers that these attributes are not exceptional testimony when compared with that of sites already inscribed on the World Heritage List such as Sarazm, for which far more detail is evident of the residential areas, decorated shrines and workshops which included pottery kilns.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified at this stage.

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Criterion (iv): *be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage (s) in human history;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the ancient site of Shahr-i Sokhta is an

outstanding example of a multi-cultural settlement during the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE. The excavations show that the city was separated into various parts according to different functions - residential, industrial and burial; it therefore represents an important stage in urban planning and as such serves as prototype in the region.

ICOMOS considers that the settlement has not been demonstrated to be multi-cultural, neither has it been shown to be an exemplar proto- historic settlement.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been demonstrated at this stage.

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ICOMOS does not consider that the criteria have been justified at this stage, and conditions of authenticity and integrity are vulnerable.

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#### **4 Factors affecting the property**

Shahr-i Sokhta is in a remote location accessed from the nearest town Zabol, which is 56 km away by the Zahedan-Zabol road constructed in 1971. The nearest village is Ramshar, 15 km from the site. The property is inhabited by 21 residents and is not subject to development pressure. Tourism numbers have grown from 53,503 in 2007 to 100,861 in 2012 and visitors are managed through the creation of a specific route through the site. Environmentally the site is subject to erosion by wind and sandstorms, seasonal rain and consequent biological factors. These have been addressed by the use of *Kahgel* (mud and straw) plaster on exposed walls, which changes their appearance to a considerable extent. Other protective measures include protective roofs and construction of support walls. No statistical seismic information is available for the area, but ICOMOS notes that there was a recent earthquake in the Sistan and Baluchistan region on 16 April 2013, said to be the strongest in Iran in the last 40 years.

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ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are from decay due to natural forces.

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#### **5 Protection, conservation and management**

##### **Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone**

The property boundary encloses the known area of the extent of the archaeological remains of the city and is morphologically well-defined by the lower limit of the slope of the low hill on which the site is located. It is marked by stakes at the co-ordination points indicated on the plan provided in the nomination dossier. The buffer zone is marked in the same way. It surrounds the property concentrically at a distance of 1.5 – 2 km. Its boundary connects high points that define the basin in which the property is located and is essentially a desert area.

Additional information provided by the State Party in response to ICOMOS' request includes a map showing that the buffer zone includes the single storey research base for the site, the emergency and fire station and water pumping station. The highway and adjacent power line pass through the buffer zone from north-east to south-west, not far outside the eastern boundary of the property. Surrounding the buffer zone concentrically at a distance of around 4 – 5 km is a landscape zone which includes a police station; research missions' accommodation; two brick kiln sites; the Hauzdar basin; Machi castle, Asbad windmills and the village of Qal'a-e Rostam. The Hamoun Lake and the castle Qal'a-e Rostam are located outside the landscape zone. ICOMOS considers that the eastern buffer zone boundary could be modified so as to distinguish between the protective zone and the area used for site services.

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ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated property are adequate but the buffer zone boundary could be modified to exclude the site services area.

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##### **Ownership**

The nominated property is in State ownership.

##### **Protection**

The property is protected by the Law for Protection of National Heritage (1930). The Law covers identification, criteria and legal protection for properties on the National Heritage List and legal provisions for archaeological excavations. Shahr-i Sokhta was registered in the list of national cultural properties of Iran as no. 542 in 1966. The bylaw Concerning Prevention of Unauthorised Excavation (1980) stipulates penalties for excavation and/or purchase of excavated historic objects and further regulation limits production, purchase, use or advertisement of metal detectors. The property is also subject to the Regulations of Cultural and Historical Properties covering all works, research and data organisation.

In the buffer zone use of heavy machinery and environmental pollutants that may harm the buffer zone is prohibited, as are installation of pollutant facilities and alteration of the topography of hills and mountains; plans for infrastructure and tourism are subject to approval by the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism organisation (ICHHTO). The landscape zone is also regulated to prevent any large scale industrial projects that may harm the environment or "deeply" affect historical, cultural and natural structures of the region. All ancient mounds within the landscape zone are subject to the same regulations as those for the nominated property. It is intended that an archaeological map of the landscape zone will be completed by the Shahr-i Sokhta Base of ICCHTO as soon as possible.

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ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place is adequate. ICOMOS considers that the protective measures for the property are adequate.

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## Conservation

The archaeological excavations and finds have been documented by the Italian Institute for Oriental Studies (IsMEO) and the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research. Records, inventory and finds are stored and analysed at the ICCHTO multi-disciplinary Base at Shahr-i Sokhta. ICOMOS notes that there is no single electronic data base connected to a geographic information system (GIS). The Base comprises a library, archives, museum, laboratory, anthropological and pathological studies centre; botany, zoology and restoration workshops; audio-visual facilities and visitors' centre. Recent research includes Magnetometer surveys in 2012 to investigate areas around existing excavations for further remains.

The excavated remains are cleaned regularly during the year and *Kahgel* plaster is applied over jute matting to conserve exposed walls. This is periodically replaced every two or three years when decayed. As noted above the plastering has an unfortunate affect on the appearance of the excavated remains. ICOMOS considers that the manner in which the plaster is applied could be improved in such a way as to allow the different surfaces (tops of walls, vertical surfaces and floors) to be distinguished by different textures. ICOMOS also considers that the use of protective roofs needs to be modified to be clearly recognisable as modern additions and avoid confusing understanding of the site.

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ICOMOS considers that conservation of the property could be improved by digitisation of the inventory/data base and by modification of the *Kahgel* plastering technique and protective roofs.

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## Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

The property is managed by the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism organisation (ICHHTO) on behalf of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran from ICCHTO's Base at the property, located in the buffer zone. The Base is advised by a steering committee comprising regional officials and experts and a technical committee comprising regional officials and experts and is divided into six sections: Technical (4 staff), Research (3 staff), Presentation and Training (5 staff), Financial, Legal and Security. The Higher Education Centre of ICCHTO and national universities provide sources of expertise and training in conservation and management. The Research Organisation of Cultural Heritage and Tourism is responsible for multi-disciplinary research and training. Students from local and national universities undertake internships at Shahr-i Sokhta. Funding is provided from national and provincial annual budgets. No information is provided on risk preparedness.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

ICOMOS notes that it is the intention of the Iranian authorities to open the country to more international tourism, incorporating cultural heritage sites such as Shahr-i Sokhta. As part of this overall policy, the provincial government has plans to relocate the road and power line out of the buffer zone, a proposal which ICOMOS supports but suggests that in the meantime the speed limit allowed on the road should be reduced where it passes the site. As well, the local ICHHTO Base plans to build a new museum underground behind the present one. An outline management plan is provided in the nomination dossier together with an outline action plan covering short, medium and long term activities relating to research, conservation, visitor management and presentation. These do not include the above-mentioned proposals regarding relocation of the road and power line and the new museum, and needs updating. The updated plan should be open to revision and cover future projects, evaluating their compatibility with the property and the protective role of the buffer zone.

Signage and a designated tourist path are provided at the site, together with visitor information (brochures and site map) at the ICCHTO Base. A guide book is also available but neither it nor the leaflet contains plans which interpret the building phases of the structures. ICOMOS considers that presentation could be improved by incorporating plans and other illustrative matter into the information panels and leaflet/guidebook in order to better explain the site to visitors.

Involvement of the local communities

Workers from local villages are employed to apply the *Kahgel* plaster to the remains.

ICOMOS considers that the management of the site is effective overall, but needs co-ordination with regional policies for the site.

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ICOMOS considers that the management system is adequate. The Management Plan should be extended to included risk preparedness and should be updated and co-ordinated with regional policies.

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## 6 Monitoring

The proposed monitoring system as provided in the nomination dossier could be improved by specifying which organisation/expert is responsible for monitoring each indicator – the table gives only the periodicity and methods/tools. Monitoring of the site surface scatter and erosion channels should be included and also seismic monitoring.

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ICOMOS considers that the monitoring system should be improved to nominate the responsible organisation or expert for each indicator and include monitoring of the surface scatter and erosion, and seismic monitoring.

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## 7 Conclusions

ICOMOS considers that while it is clear that Shahr-i Sokhta was a very large and important city within south-eastern Iran and the excavations and multi-disciplinary research since the 1960s have brought to light well-preserved evidence in the form of its mud-brick structures, burial grounds, workshops and artefacts that testify to its size, organisation, the source of its wealth and its trade and social structures, ICOMOS does not consider that Shahr-i Sokhta stands out in relation to comparable sites in the wider region beyond south-eastern Iran. Outstanding Universal Value has not been demonstrated at this stage. ICOMOS considers that the property does not meet criteria (ii), (iii) and (iv) at this stage and its integrity and authenticity are vulnerable due to the way in which conservation techniques are being implemented. The eastern boundary of the buffer zone could be modified to exclude the services area and conservation of the property could be improved by digitisation of the inventory/data base and by modification of the *Kahgel* plastering technique and protective roofs. The Management Plan should be extended to include risk preparedness and should be updated and co-ordinated with regional policies. The monitoring system should be improved to nominate the responsible organisation or expert for each indicator and include monitoring of the surface scatter and erosion, and seismic monitoring.

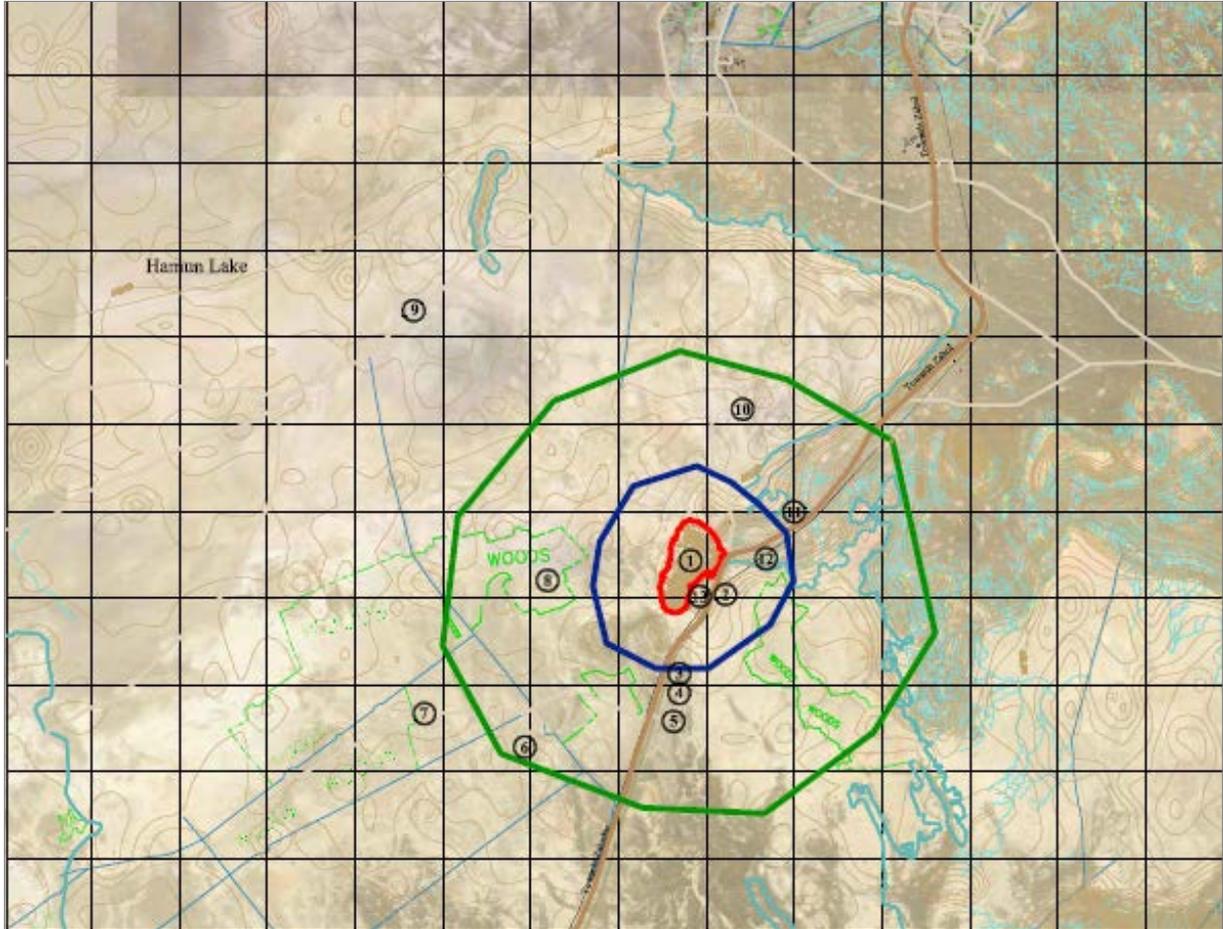
## 8 Recommendations

### Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the examination of the nomination of Shahr-i Sokhta, Islamic Republic of Iran, to the World Heritage List be **deferred** in order to allow the State Party to:

- Continue research and investigations;
- If substantial publication of results provides a greater understanding of the relationship of Shahr-i Sokhta to other civilizations, or to the way it might be considered as an exemplar of a proto-historic settlement, then consider re-nominating the property.

ICOMOS considers that any revised nomination would need to be considered by an expert mission to the site.



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property



Aerial view of Shahr-i Sokhta



Monumental area



Graveyard



Grave