

State Party: Eritrea

Region: Central Region

Name of Property: Asmara: Africa's Modernist City

Geographical coordinates: N 15 20' 12" and E 38 56' 47"

Description of the boundary of the nominated property:

Asmara: Africa's Modernist City, is the capital of Eritrea, in the Horn of Africa. The city is located in the centre of the country in the Central Region Administration on a plateau 2,300m above sea level at the edge of an escarpment that forms part of the great East Africa rift system.

The nominated property comprises Asmara's 'historic' centre developed during the years of Italian occupation from 1889-1941. The boundaries of the nominated property are those of the escarpment edge to the east, the prominent land formation of 'Forto' and the cemeteries to the west, the former native settlement of Abbashawel to the north, and the districts of Gejeret and Tiravolo to the south.

A Buffer Zone surrounds the nominated property and follows urban and natural features (the city

limits up to the peaks of surrounding hills and the escarpment edge) and urban districts (industrial and more recent residential zones on the city's southern outskirts and residential developments to the north).

A Protected Zone encircles the eastern and northern perimeters of the Buffer Zone. This is designed to protect the 'green belt' of the escarpment edge which forms a prominent and picturesque backdrop to the city.

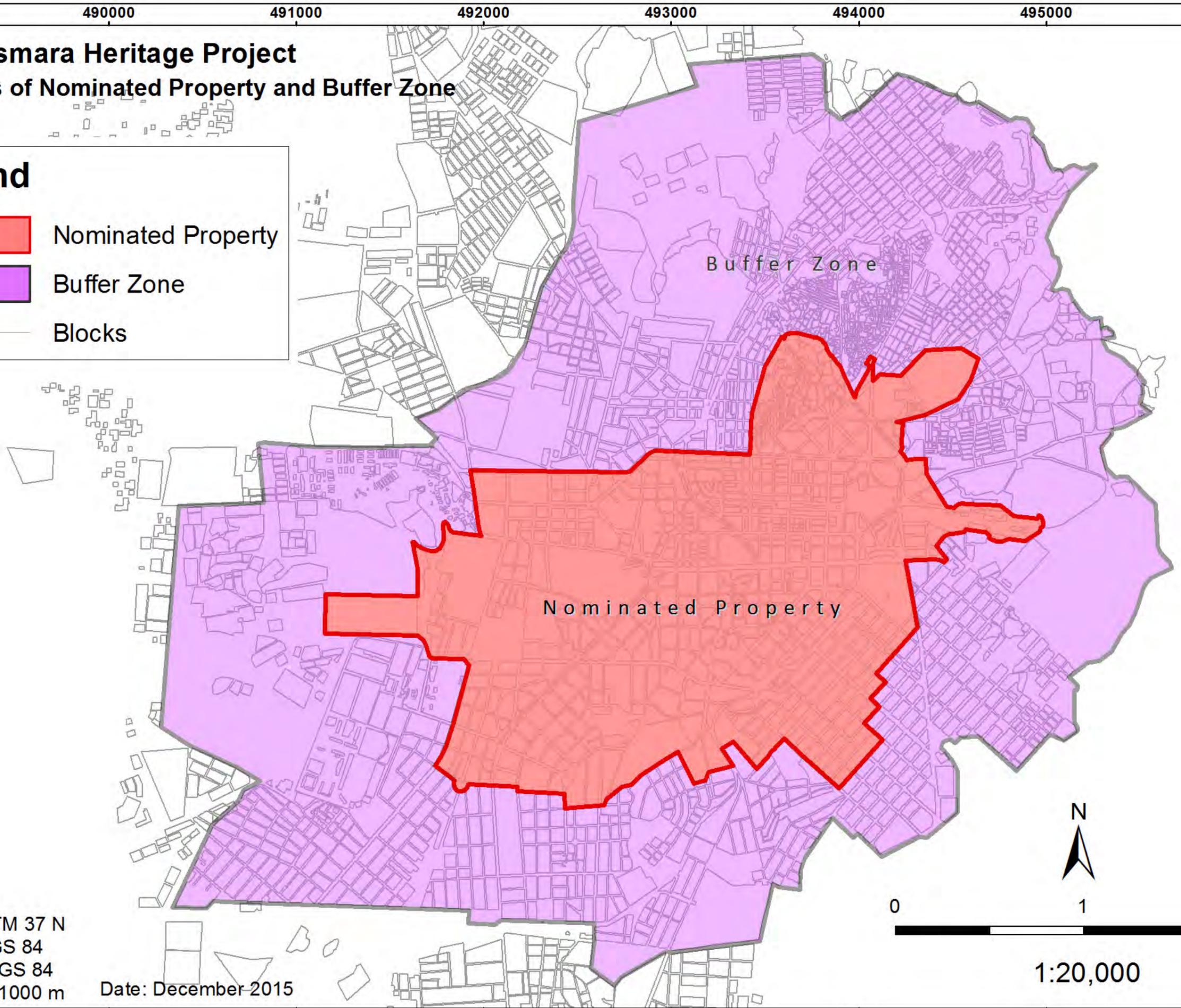
The nominated property extends approximately 2.5km from north to south and 3.5km from east to west covering a total area of 481ha. The buffer zone extends approximately 4.6km from north to south and 5km from east to west covering a total area of 1,203ha.

Asmara Heritage Project

Boundaries of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone

Legend

-  Nominated Property
-  Buffer Zone
-  Blocks



Projection: UTM 37 N
Datum: WGS 84
Spheroid: WGS 84
Grid Interval: 1000 m

Date: December 2015

0 1 2 Km

1:20,000

Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Criteria under which property is nominated

Criterion (ii), (iii) and (iv)

Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Brief Synthesis

The modernist city of Asmara, capital of Eritrea, is an outstanding example of a colonial capital that bears witness to the universal encounter with modernity in the 20th century and consequent postcolonial experiences. The historic urban landscape embodies in a whole city the unity of innovative urban planning and modernist architecture combined with local natural and cultural conditions. An urban planning process based on functional and racial zoning demonstrates the Italian colonial response from the late 19th century to the challenges of modern urban requirements in a highland African setting. The architectural character exemplifies a period of intense development in the 1930s that coincided with the global proliferation and artistic apogee of pre-war modernism and its various forms. The result is a total urban landscape characterised by its human-scale and mixed uses, built forms, and activities, including well-defined open spaces, cinemas, shops, banks, religious structures, public and private offices, industrial facilities, and residences. The integrity and authenticity of Asmara's functional, aesthetic and cultural values have been retained through a protracted struggle for independence and subsequently assimilated into a national consciousness in which Asmara features centrally.

Criterion (ii): Asmara exhibits an outstanding example of the interchange of cultural influences brought about by the encounter with modernity in an African context. The exchange is expressed

in the unity of an innovative urban planning process and distinguished modernist architecture combined with local natural and cultural conditions to create a distinctive urbanism based on human scale.

Criterion (iii): As a well-preserved total urban landscape and modern capital of Eritrea, Asmara bears exceptional testimony to the universal aspiration for and attainment of national self-determination founded on the protracted development of indigenous cultural and political consciousness through multiple encounters with regional civilisations and colonial experiences. Asmara was once a centre of established cultural traditions and trading networks spanning the region, before becoming the locus of uniquely varied foreign agendas of global significance before and during the Second World War and throughout the Cold War.

Criterion (iv): Asmara is an outstanding example of the transition in architecture and town planning at the turn of the 20th century in response to the universal encounter with modernity in an African context. The synthesis of modern town planning and architecture in a total urban landscape is an exemplar of early modernism adapted to local cultural and geographic conditions. As an urban landscape, Asmara encapsulates key stages of modernity's development and principal characteristics, including colonialism and global conflict, scientific responses to planning and infrastructure, rapid technological and urban development, and pioneering transportation and communication.

Statement of Integrity

All the significant architectural structures and the original urban layout, including most of the

characteristic features and public spaces, have been retained in their entirety. The site has also retained its historical, cultural, functional and architectural integrity with their elements largely intact and generally in good condition. The only negative impacts have been the occasional inapt restoration of older structures and the construction of some buildings in the late 20th century that are inappropriate in size, scale or character. Despite continuing developmental pressures, the establishment of the 'Historic Perimeter' around the centre of the city since 2001 and a moratorium on new construction within this perimeter by the municipal authorities have safeguarded the site's integrity.

The integrity of the intangible attributes associated with the indigenous community that has inhabited parts of the site for centuries has been maintained through a process of cultural continuity that, despite successive waves of foreign influence, has been successfully assimilated into a modern national consciousness and a national capital.

Statement of Authenticity

Asmara's combination of innovative town planning and modernist architecture in an African context represent important and early developmental phases of town planning and architectural modernism and therefore possess a high level of authenticity. The creation of Asmara's urban plan coincided with the establishment of the modern profession of town planning; while the subsequent accretion of the city's modernist architecture, characterised by the specifically Italian interpretation known as Rationalism, corresponded with the pre-war peak of modernism. Climatic, cultural, economic and political conditions over subsequent decades have been favourable in retaining the artistic, material and functional values of the city's architectural elements, which include cinemas, apartment buildings, villas, petrol stations, factories, churches, and public buildings.

The authenticity of local intangible attributes manifest in language, cultural practices, national identity, and sense of place have been retained through Asmara's evolution from an indigenous centre of economy and administration, through

a colonial capital, to a modern capital of an independent state.

Requirements for Protection and Management

Measures to protect and manage Asmara's historic urban landscape have been established and implemented. The Asmara Heritage Project (AHP) was founded in 2014 under the auspices of the Central Region Administration. The AHP is responsible for the production and implementation of the *Integrated Management Plan for Asmara* (2016) and the *Disaster and Risk Management Framework* (see Annex). They have also completed a comprehensive building survey for the entire site encompassing over 4,300 buildings, which will provide the basis for a future system of heritage listing. The AHP and the Department of Public Works Development (DPWD) are also responsible for issuing building permits, granting permission for maintenance and restoration, and enforcing compliance of building regulations.

The country's first heritage law was proclaimed on 30th September 2015, guaranteeing legal protection of heritage assets in their various forms (see *The Cultural and Natural Heritage Proclamation* in the Annex).

Since 2001, a moratorium has been imposed by the Municipality of Asmara on all construction within Asmara's Historic Perimeter, a boundary that was drawn up by the now discontinued Cultural Assets Rehabilitation Project (CARP) to protect Asmara's historic city centre. The site boundary of the nominated property is based on this previous Historic Perimeter with various amendments.

Name and contact information of official local institution / agency:

Medhanic Teklemariam
Asmara Heritage Project
Department of Public Works Development
Central Region Administration
P.O.Box 259
Asmara, Eritrea
Tel: 002911112485/002911112486
Cell: 002917132810 / Fax: 002911112487
Email: medhanetm@gmail.com