

# ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES  
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES  
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS  
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

Our Ref. GB/AS/1550

Charenton-le-Pont, 13 October 2016

H. E. Mrs Hanna Simon  
Permanent Delegation of Eritrea to  
UNESCO  
Ambassade de l'Erythrée  
1, rue de Staël  
75015 Paris

World Heritage List 2017  
**Asmara: Africa's Modernist City (Eritrea)**

Dear Madam,

ICOMOS is currently assessing the nomination of "Asmara: Africa's Modernist City" as World Heritage Site, and an ICOMOS evaluation mission will be visiting the property to consider matters related to protection, management and conservation, as well as issues related to integrity and authenticity.

In order to help with our overall evaluation process, we would be grateful to receive information to augment what has already been submitted in the nomination dossier.

Therefore, we would be pleased if the State Party could consider the following points and kindly provide additional information:

## **Criterion (ii)**

Could the State Party further illustrate how the interchange of human values is expressed by the nominated property and its attributes, e.g. in terms of urban layout and organisation, architectural languages and forms, building techniques and materials, working forces, construction skills, etc.?

At present, this interchange is only suggested but not adequately supported by the description of the nominated property or by how it has been planned, constructed or evolved.

## **Boundaries**

The nomination dossier does not explain with enough details which is the rationale for the delineation of the boundaries of the nominated property and of the buffer zone. It seems that only a short list at p. 31 mentions what is included (the evolving urban plan, the modernist architecture and the African context) and a brief description at p. 32 deals with the boundary issue.

Could the State Party further explain the rationale for delineating the boundaries of the nominated property and of the buffer zone in relation both to the overall concept of the nomination – that is to say the congruence/ consistency between what is being nominated and the reasons underlying the proposed OUV – and to the physical integrity and density of relevant attributes of the nominated property?

Could the State Party provide detailed information on how the buffer zone has been defined?

### **Protection and Management plan**

The nomination dossier mentions different legal instruments (table at p. 378).

Could the State Party clarify how these instruments altogether provide protection to the nominated property, what is in force, what has expired and what has not been enforced yet?

In particular, the legislation for heritage protection appears to be recent (September 2015). It would be therefore important to understand whether the nominated property enjoys already legal protection under this Act or not.

In the latter case, could the State Party provide detailed information on the legal protection currently in place for the nominated property and specify if the nominated property is entirely covered by a decree?

Could the State Party explain if specific neighbourhoods are protected but not the entirety of the nominated city? If none of these applies, could the State Party explain if Asmara urban layout and built heritage are currently protected by legal means and how?

Could the State Party explain which form of protection is in place for the buffer zone and how and through which measures the buffer zone is going to grant the additional layer of protection to the nominated property?

The Integrated management plan mentions 'concerned departments and authorities' but could the State Party specify whether the system is in place and which are the administrative processes/procedures that would ensure that no negative impacts derive from activities within the buffer zone? Regarding the concept of an additional protected zone, could the State Party provide explanations on whether regulating measures are in place and how they should be implemented to ensure that this additional 'buffer' performs its function effectively?

Apart from legal protection, could the State Party explain how the different levels of planning instruments and regulations mentioned in the nomination dossier integrate each other in order to ensure the Asmara's heritage values and the proposed Outstanding Universal Value and Asmara urban landscape are protected and transmitted to the future?

The nomination dossier mentions different plans and an Integrated Management Plan (IMP – 2016). Could the State Party detail whether the plan has been completed, approved and enforced or, if not, by when it will enter into force?

Additionally, could the State Party clearly explain how the IMP relates to any existing planning instruments already in place for the nominated property and for the buffer zone, as well as what is the legal basis for the IMP, that is to say, whether there is any law, decree, regulations or other legal means that makes mandatory the implementation of the IMP?

Could the State Party explain if the management system/ institutional framework created a new body or identified an existing one and appropriate administrative instrument to ensure that any planning provisions or project development do not have an adverse impact on the proposed OUV, integrity and authenticity of the nominated property?

The nomination dossier mentions (p. 381) that an institutional framework/ 'focal organ' needs to be created for the overall management of the property. It also describes the different bodies with responsibilities at different levels and for different tasks within the city of Asmara.

Could the State Party explain whether a final decision has been taken with regard to the managing body of the nominated property, which is its mandate and means to perform its functions, and how it will interact with other relevant agencies, administrations and bodies responsible for different tasks?

### **Historic Urban Landscape**

Could the State Party provide additional information on how the HUL concept – which is to be understood as an approach rather than a property category - is being incorporated into the overall planning system for Asmara beyond the boundaries of the nominated property and of its buffer zone,

in order to ensure that the proposed OUV and its attributes are not negatively impacted upon by activities or developments that may take place outside the nominated property and its buffer zone?

We look forward to your responses to these points, which will be of great help in our evaluation process.

We would be grateful if you could provide ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre with the above information by **Monday 14 November 2016 at the latest**, and we thank you in advance for your kind cooperation.

Yours faithfully,



Gwenaëlle Bourdin  
Director  
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to Eritrea – National Commission for UNESCO  
UNESCO World Heritage Centre



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Asmara  
Ref. 14/11/2016  
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ICOMOS Evaluation Unit  
94220 Charenton le Pont  
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France

Subject: Asmara: Africa's Modernist City for World Heritage List 2017

Dear Madam,

We would thank for your letter dated on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2016, with reference no. GB/AS/1550 in which you requested for additional information on Asmara: Africa's Modernist City nomination for World Heritage List in 2017.

Let me confirm that the state of Eritrea through the Central Region Administration guarantees and take all the necessary steps to ensure that the adequate management plan for Asmara: Africa's Modernist City according to the 2015 proclamation on the Cultural and Natural Heritage. This would be achieved in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Commission Culture and Sports.

Furthermore, the Integrated Management was endorsed in September 2016. The Central Region Administration expresses its commitment and support to the implementation of the Integrated Management Plan (2016).

The Central Region Administration has been preparing the urban conservation master plan, the planning norms and regulation since 2014 in order to safeguard and valorise the rich urban and architectural Heritage of Asmara. The completion of these two documents in 2017 will provide additional management tool to the nominated property.

We are pleased to inform you that we are sending the supplementary information attached with this letter.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you may require additional information.

Sincerely yours,

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አማሓዳሪ ሰባ ማእከል  
M. General Romodan Osman  
Governor of Zoba Maakel



## **Annex: Additional Information request by ICOMOS**

### **CRITERIA II**

Criteria ii – to 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.

*Could the State Party further illustrate how the interchange of human values is expressed by the nominated property and its attributes, e.g. in terms of urban layout and organisation, architectural languages and forms. Building techniques and materials, working forces, construction skills, etc.? At present the interchange is only suggested but not adequately supported by the description of the nominated property or by how it has been planned, constructed or evolved.*

There are two ways in which this nomination exhibits an important interchange of human values on developments in architecture and town-planning. The first is concerned with the city's original planning and its subsequent modernist architecture in the early twentieth century. The second is concerned with Eritrea's response to the physical legacies of this interchange of values as urban heritage in the early twenty-first century. Both are discussed in the nomination dossier, but explained further here.

1. The foundation of the modern city of Asmara, as occurred in many early modern cities, coincided with the establishment of urban planning as a distinct profession around the turn of the century. The profession's development that corresponded with the proliferation of new cities and extensions of existing cities at the end of the nineteenth century in response to rapid urbanization and industrialisation is evidenced in the bibliographic record of publications associated with urban planning from the 1870s to 1910s. These include: *Stadterweiterungen in technischer, baupolizeilicher und Wirtschaftlicher Beziehung (Town extensions: their links with technical and economic concerns and with building regulations)* (Reinhard Baumeister 1876 ); *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen (City Planning According to Artistic Principles)* (Camillo Sitte, 1889); *City Planning* (Josef Stübben, 1890); *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (Ebenezer Howard, 1898); *The Improvement of Towns and Cities* (Charles Mulford Robinson, 1901); *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (Ebenezer Howard, 1902); *Modern Civic Art, or The City Made Beautiful* (Charles Mulford Robinson, 1904); *Town Planning: Past, Present and Possible* (Henry Inigo Triggs, 1909); *Town Planning in Practice* (Robert Unwin, 1909); and *Civic Art* (Thomas Mawson, 1911).

Asmara's urban planning, which has retained its integrity since its inception, is testimony to the significant interchange of human values through town planning at this critical juncture in human development, when industrialisation initiated the process that by the end of the century resulted in the urbanization of the species. Asmara's plan exhibits in a whole scheme many of the different approaches to urban planning during this early period, combining grid, radial, monumental and picturesque road networks, urban zoning, and industrial infrastructure and technological innovations such as the road and railway (which both climb 2,500m in 110km) and the world's longest cable-

car, as well as responses to the African context, including racial segregation and abundant cheap labour (see *Nomination Dossier* pp.37-47). Oral testimonies, scientific research and photographic archives provide unequivocal evidence of the essential role tens of thousands of Eritreans played in the development of infrastructure and technological innovations that were vital to Asmara and to Italy's wider imperial ambitions. Exposure to technological innovations and the acquisition of associated skills and expertise during this period had a lasting impact on the Eritrean workforce which, in subsequent decades and despite its relatively small size, played a vital role in the industrial, construction and transport sectors in Federal Ethiopia.

Asmara's architecture, which, like the city's planning, has also retained its integrity since its construction, also bears witness to the significant interchange of human values through modernist and monumental architecture at a critical point in architectural and human history. The 1920s and 1930s were the decades in which architectural modernism flourished in Europe. As with urban planning in the preceding decades, the 1920s and 1930s witnessed a proliferation of modernist architectural treatises and manifestoes. The theory and practice of modernism were swiftly exported overseas. Colonialism was an efficient channel for this mode of exportation, giving rise to a range of architectural encounters that had a transformative effect both in the colonies and in the homeland.

The economic, political and practical conditions in Asmara provided a unique setting in which Italy's modernist architects could realize their personal and professional dreams. Asmara can therefore be seen as a modernist architectural laboratory, where Rationalism (the distinctly Italian dialect within modernism's international language) was articulated in varied tones. There exists in Asmara a wider range of architectural language than in many other modernist cities, whether Italian or otherwise, where architectural uniformity was an important ingredient of the modernist objective (e.g. Tel Aviv's Bauhaus-inspired White City or Sabaudia's politically motivated Rationalist monumentalize). Asmara's greater architectural variety is evident in the range of different building types, functions, techniques and materials, exemplified in two buildings and in the technical and visual impact of traditional local building techniques and materials:

1. St. Mary's Orthodox Cathedral
2. Fiat Tagliero service station
3. The use of local stone (basalt)

Constructed at the height of fascism, St Mary's Orthodox Cathedral (see *Nomination Dossier* pp.240-245) is a unique example of the combination of Rationalism and African vernacular architecture and symbolises the interchange of other human characteristics and values, such as politics and religion and science and spiritualism. Although extraordinary, the blending of opposing architectural, political, social and religious values in a single building was permissible because of its African setting, far removed from the political centre of Rome. St Mary's Orthodox Cathedral, although unique, is therefore symptomatic of Asmara's wider experience. Mussolini might have intended Asmara to be the capital of new Roman Empire in Africa, but it was in reality a long way from the political extremism in Europe that inhibited artists and architects and therefore became a place of relative creative freedom in which architects were less constrained by political, economic or social exigencies.

This creative freedom is manifest in Asmara's most famous structure, the Fiat Tagliero service station, an exemplar of the interchange of human values in modernist architecture. In 1909, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, published *The Futurist Manifesto*, one of the most important texts in the formation of modernist theory. Futurism eulogised 'modern capitals ... the nocturnal vibration of workshops ... gluttonous railway stations ... factories ... bridges ... great-breasted locomotives ... and the gliding flight of aeroplanes whose propeller sounds like the flapping of a flag and the applause of enthusiastic crowds,' all of which were facets of modernity that could be found in Eritrea. Although conventional architectural history claims Futurism's expression occurred principally on paper with fantastical schemes such as those by Antonio Sant'Elia, in the comparatively remote setting of Italy's Eritrean colony, Futurism did find expression in the bold and brilliant aeroplane form of Fiat's Tagliero service station with its 30m cantilevered wings. The fact that the Futurists later fell out of favour with the fascist regime makes this African example all the more significant.

In 1912, Marinetti witnessed Italy's invasion of Libya and two years later was briefly imprisoned with fellow pro-war activist Benito Mussolini, whom he joined as a fascist electoral candidate for Milan in 1919. In 1935 Marinetti returned to Africa to witness Italy's conquest of Ethiopia, when the Italian air force launched devastating chemical attacks on Ethiopian villages. The nightmarish vision of modern flying machines delivering death from the skies was a futurist's dream – the perfect marriage of modernity and war, inseparable bedfellows and defining experiences of the twentieth century. Three years later, Tagliero was erected on the major junction of the main road leading from Asmara to Ethiopia. Today it stands as a monument to its age and a rare – perhaps unique – example of architectural Futurism and the questionable values originally espoused by a small group of artists who came to have a disproportionately significant influence not only on the modern movement, but on the entire world throughout the twentieth century.

Finally, with a scarcity of resources, even during Asmara's major boom from 1935-1940, the Italians had to rely on local building materials and construction techniques, even for modernist buildings whose smooth and angular plastered exterior cleanly painted belies the comparatively elementary materials beneath. The ubiquity of local basalt (see *Nomination Dossier* pp.261-262) as a primary building material can be seen in virtually all of Asmara's buildings, whether modernist or otherwise. Basalt's hardness and impermeability makes it an ideal building material, especially for foundations and lower courses, where it is widely used and often visible (either deliberately or where plaster has blown) throughout Asmara (for a selection of visible examples, see *Nomination Dossier*: Bristol Pension (p.75); Ministry of Education (pp.78-79); Piazza Roma fountain (p.141); President's Office (p.143); Capitol Cinema (pp.166-167); Maryam Gmbi (p.179); Fiat Workshops (p.181); villas (p.187); San Francesco Church (pp.192-193); Spinelli Store (p.195); former Alfa Romeo workshops (pp.196-197); Office of Finance Police (p.209); Regional Government Offices (p.210); apartments (p.211); Medeber Market (pp.234-235); St Mary's Orthodox Cathedral and Dege Selam (pp.240-245); and Cinema Hamasien (pp.246-247). The ubiquity of basalt as a building material in Asmara's modern buildings creates a distinguishing feature of modernism in Asmara that, due to its local context, cannot be found anywhere else. Buildings are generally low-rise and plastered, though in many instances this basalt is left exposed and even celebrated in its patterned arrangement. Where it is concealed, a band of raised plaster at ground level provides evidence of the thick layer of load-bearing basalt beneath.

2. The second way in which this nomination exhibits an important interchange of human values on developments in architecture and town-planning is evidenced in Eritrea's response to the physical legacies of its colonial heritage and the human values they embodied. For more than a decade, the Municipality of Asmara has imposed a moratorium on new construction in the historic centre of Asmara. The rationale behind this controversial decision is to safeguard the unique character of Asmara and the social context it harboured, which many felt was being eroded in the immediate aftermath of liberation in 1991, when several large buildings were constructed that were deemed detrimental to the city's existing urban form, grain, scale and social functions. The question was brought sharply into focus in the mid-1990s when a series of high-rise glass-clad towers designed by a foreign architectural practice were proposed in the heart of the city. The construction of these towers would have not only transformed the character of Asmara's centre, but also required the destruction of a former prison. Those leading the opposition were former inmates of the prison who did not wish to see their history – however uncomfortable – eradicated. This significant event resonated with a growing public sentiment for protecting Asmara's exceptional urban qualities and subsequently led to a series of major projects supported by international agencies designed to safeguard and rehabilitate Asmara's cultural heritage. In short, Eritrea's measured and judicious response to the physical legacies of its colonial past not only seeks to conserve the qualities of its capital, but also exhibits an important interchange of human values in how communities all over the world engage with their historic urban environments in the twenty-first century irrespective of their origins.

Far from being an attempt to freeze the city in perpetuity, the Municipality of Asmara's decision was a temporary measure to allow the relevant authorities to undertake the necessary research and implement the necessary policies (Building Regulations, Conservation Master Plans, heritage laws, etc) that would allow to the city to develop while safeguarding its exceptional tangible and intangible characteristics exemplified by its distinctive urbanism based on human scale. This decision is the culmination of a century-long process that for Eritrea began with the inception and planning of their future capital that was later furnished with modernist and which socially and physically excluded Eritreans, and ended with the attainment of national independence and complete assimilation by Eritreans. Throughout that period, Asmara experienced five distinct political circumstances (Italian colonial, Fascist, British, Ethiopian (Imperial), Ethiopian Communist under three different regimes (Italian, British, Ethiopian). This experience is critical to Eritrea's response to their capital's urban and architectural heritage for which it is seeking international recognition and by any measure should not be taken for granted. In many countries where independence followed directly from colonialism, the urban and architectural legacies were physical and painful everyday reminders of the often odious values of a former regime and consequently neglected, altered or destroyed. All of Italy's other former African colonies attest to this experience. The integrity of Italy's urban planning or architectural interventions in Libya, Somalia and Ethiopia cannot compare with Asmara or elsewhere in Eritrea. Eritrea's response to the physical components of its colonial past is testament to a profound shift in human values throughout the century of modernity. Despite being conceived and developed under colonisation and fascism and largely neglected throughout the periods of occupation by the British and by an African neighbor, Eritrea has sought to protect the qualities inherent in Asmara's human scale that has been embraced and assimilated by Eritrean cultural values, which have revived the city as the capital of



an independent state. Asmara is not a museum, but a living city and the interchange of human values for which the city seeks recognition are just as much an essential part of history as they are a vital part of the city's present and future.

## **BOUNDARIES**

*The nomination dossier does not explain with enough details which is the rationale for the delineation of the boundaries of the nominated property and of the buffer zone. It seems that only a short list at p. 31 mentions what is included (the evolving urban plan, the modernist architecture and the African context) and a brief description at p. 32 deals with the boundary issue.*

*Could the State Party further explain the rationale for delineating the boundaries of the nominated property and of the buffer zone in relation both to the overall concept of the nomination – that is to say the congruence/ consistency between what is being nominated and the reasons underlying the proposed OUV – and to the physical integrity and density of relevant attributes of the nominated property? Could the State Party provide detailed information on how the buffer zone has been defined?*

**The Nominated Property:** Firstly, the rationale behind the boundary delineation of the nominated property is the incorporation of the urban layout that had evolved through successive stages of urban planning with an accurate representation of its urban fabric and structures. This comprises the first major master plan designed by Oduardo Cavagnari in 1913 and subsequent adaptations and extensions culminating in the 1938 urban plan by Vittorio Cafiero. The defining principle guiding the Nominated Site's boundary is therefore the realized elements of successive urban plans up to 1938.

Secondly, the boundary contains the prominent historic buildings with varied architectural forms and styles of modernism that had been constructed throughout the same period, particularly from 1935-1941. Most of the architecturally significant buildings constructed during this period lie within nominated property's boundary and conform to the building bylaws implemented in 1938. They therefore following the strict application of these bylaws and most are less than four-storeys high. Collectively, these buildings form the comparatively low-rise skyline that characterizes Asmara's urban environment and in turn reflects and respects the visual integrity of the cityscape. Asmara's modernist buildings were planned and built to adapt to the topography of the natural landscape, which had been ingeniously incorporated into the urban plan by Cavagnari. This remarkable visual integrity provides an architecturally aesthetic appeal to the inhabitants and visitors alike.

Thirdly, as regard to the rationale behind the extent of the nominated property's boundary limits; to the north, it passes through the Mai Bella Avenue alongside the industrial premises of Royale Automobile Club of Italy (RACI) and Soap Factory (see Nomination Dossier pp.169-171) that had been built in 1937, in which the design of the building had been influenced by the Rationalist architectural style. The boundary continues in an easterly direction towards Afabet Road which

begins at the shops and apartment building (constructed in 1942) that has a rounded façade that adapts to the spatial configuration of the site. From here, the boundary extends to the indigenous quarter of Abbashawel, or former ‘native quarter’, where the local Eritrean community and the city’s labour force lived. The inclusion of Abba shawel is based on the indivisibility of modernist city and native ‘other’. The latter was a consequence of the former and both were mutually dependent and equal products of Asmara’s encounter with modernity.

The inclusion of the former ‘native quarter’ of Abbashawel is based on the indivisibility of modernist city and native ‘other’. The latter was a consequence of the former and both were mutually dependent and equal products of Asmara’s encounter with modernity.

To the east, the boundary includes the Railway Station (constructed in 1911), which – combined with the adjacent main road – serves as the gateway to Asmara for travelers arriving from the port city of Massawa, as well as the main supply route of imported materials and goods used to construct the city.

To the south east, the boundary includes the neighborhood of Gheza Banda, which was envisioned by Cavagnari as a large grid diagonally affixed to the city centre in his 1938 plan. Gheza Banda was a residential area of low paid and semi-skilled Italian workers who participated during the construction of the city, but it was not fully implemented until after the Second World War, with some plots remaining unoccupied for decades. This incompleteness accounts for the boundary’s irregular course through this grid layout, which has been carefully selected on the basis of the boundary’s principal rationale - the realized elements of urban plans up to 1938.

To the south, the boundary encompasses Denden Camp and San Francesco Church, which was constructed in 1938 in a Romanesque style and formed the centerpiece of a new suburb.

The line of the boundary follows the limits of these suburban extensions to the western limits of the city, where it encircles the Eritrean and Italian Cemeteries wherein many of the city’s planners, architects, and engineers, including Cavagnari, were buried.

The delineation of a boundary around a historic city is always going to be contentious and open to debate. The delineation of the current boundary is an adaptation of a previously defined Historic Perimeter by a former project, the World Bank-funded Cultural Assets Rehabilitation Project (CARP) (see *Nomination Dossier* p.378). The defining principle guiding the Nominated Site’s boundary is the realized elements of the 1938 urban plan by Vittorio Cafiero. This plan defines the extent of the modernist planning of Asmara during the period. Not all of it was fully realized at the time, as in the suburb of Gheza Banda and outlying areas designated for Eritreans, which make the delineation of some parts of the boundary appear disputable. In all cases, the principle remains paramount: the combination of modernist architecture and modern planning.

In conclusion, the boundary of the nominated property comprises the physical limits of the urban environment from which the city obtains its unique urban identity and human scale. This urban context was largely defined by the end of the 1930s, though it had evolved through successive stages of urban planning since the early 1900s that had successfully combined grid, radial,

monumental and curvilinear street patterns that both exploited and responded to the natural landscape and provided the setting for sensitively planned and designed modern architecture that in turn responded to the spatial conditions of site, streetscape and urban context.

**Buffer Zone:** The boundary of the buffer zone surrounds the nominated property and follows various physical as well as natural features. Mostly, it includes buildings constructed during the successive Ethiopian Administrations and which are predominantly residential as well as commercial villas and apartments. The construction of buildings within the limits of buffer zone are generally not subject to any special approval procedures but they are subject to regulations indicated in the respective urban master plans and to the norms and bylaws of the 1938 regulation that comply to the standards applicable to the nominated property.

In cases where buildings and planning projects that may potentially have a negative impact on the nominated property due to their particular form and configuration or the nature of built structures or urban planning contexts, such projects must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and where relevant will require special consent for approval from the concerned departments and authorities with responsibility for the protection of World Heritage asset at a national level. For further information see annex volume 2, page 50-56.

## **PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

*The nomination dossier mentions different legal instruments (table at p. 378). Could the State Party clarify how these instruments altogether provide protection to the nominated property, what is in force, what has expired and what has not been enforced yet? In particular, the legislation for heritage protection appears to be recent (September 2015). It would be therefore important to understand whether the nominated property enjoys already legal protection under this Act or not.*

The legal instruments relevant to the application for inscription of Asmara are all contained in Annex Volume 2 of the Nomination Dossier. They are:

- Cultural and Natural Heritage Proclamation (CNHP) of 2015 (p.231)
- The 1938 Asmara Building Regulation (p.791, 833)
- Outline Urban Planning Regulation (OUPR) of 2005 (p.558)
- Draft Asmara Planning Norms and Regulations of 2015 (p.418)

Over and above these, there are:

- The 1914 Eritrea Building Regulation
- The Asmara Municipality moratorium of 2001 suspending the building of high-rise buildings in Asmara
- The Interim Building Regulation of 2003 and
- The Strategic Urban Development Plan (SUDP) of 2006

*Which legal instruments are in force and at which level?*

All but the Draft Asmara Planning Norms and Regulations of 2015 and the Interim Building Regulation of 2003 are in enforced. Whereas the CNHP, the 1914 Eritrea Building Regulation, the



OUPR and the SUDP have been implemented at the national level, the rest were designed for and are implemented specifically in and for Asmara.

With regards to the legal instruments specific to Asmara, the most notable legal instrument is the 1938 Asmara Building Regulation, which is still in force. It is a comprehensive regulation (see annex of its table of contents) that was issued around the time when Asmara was undergoing rapid development as a modern capital (1935-1941). It constituted the building commission (now the building committee at the Municipality of Asmara) and dealt with the issue of permits, siting of buildings, internal constructions, interiors of buildings, stability of construction, fire prevention, special matters (such as drinking water, fences, kiosks, antennae, canopies, signs, demolition of buildings, etc), supervision of works and penalties. This regulation is still in force and the Municipality of Asmara and the Central Region Administration are the prime implementers and enforcers of this regulation. As this regulation applies to the entire city, it gives legal protection to the nominated area and the areas beyond it comprising the boundary of the city of Asmara.

Moreover, the 2001 moratorium imposed the construction of high-rise buildings by the city administration and applies to the nominated area. Legal support to issue the moratorium was obtained from Proclamation 86/1996 which constituted the regional, sub-regional and city/village level administration structures for the country and which details the powers and responsibilities to the respective administrators of these structures.

The aforementioned Asmara-specific legal instruments in force are implemented in conjunction with the four nationally-applicable legal instruments (the 1914 Building Regulation, the CNHP, OUPR and SUDP). Whereas the implementation of the CNHP is yet to take shape, the other three are in force. Particularly, the OUPR of 2005 and the SUDP of 2006 issued by the Ministry of Public Works have the additional benefit of taking into consideration matters that the 1938 Asmara Building Regulation did not sufficiently cover (structural, electrical, water and sanitary installation, fire and safety, as well as technological installation).

***Drafts towards official enactment:*** Furthermore, the Central Region Administration (Municipality of Asmara) has now finalized the drafting process of the Asmara Planning Norms and Regulations of 2015 and the Interim Building Regulation of 2003 which will, without disturbing the essence of the 1938 regulation) update it to maintain Asmara's rich urban heritage values for the coming generations.

***Whether there are specific neighborhoods are protected:*** The way the Nomination Dossier has been designed, the way the nominated area has been divided into fourteen areas, and the manner of the enforcement of the aforementioned legal instruments composes a comprehensive protection of the entire nominated area. Presently there is no plan to protect specific neighborhoods. However, with the steady implementation of the CNHP, there is enough room for the implementing authorities (via Article 25 of the CNHP) to declare a specific area (in Asmara or elsewhere in the country) a Protected Site and develop plans for its preservation, conservation or protection.

***Could the State Party explain which form of protection is in place for the buffer zone and how and through which measures the buffer zone is going to grant the additional layer of***

***protection to the nominated property?***

The buffer zone surrounds the nominated property and follows various physical and natural features. The buffer zone contains areas of the city that developed following Italian colonization, consolidated at the same time as the colonial city on the basis of the directives of the subsequent Master Plans. The buffer zone shall be subject to the rules and regulations provided by the Urban Conservation Master Plan, indicating volumetric limits and heights to avoid any negative visual impact on the nominated property and will provide additional layer of protection measures. Furthermore, the existing planning documents (the SUDP and the OUPR) provide strategic orientation of urban development activities as well as protection and control in terms of height, compatibility in function and volumetric limits to the buffer zone. For further information see annex volume 2, page 508-558.

***The Integrated management plan mentions 'concerned departments and authorities' but could the State Party specify whether the system is in place and which are the administrative processes/ procedures that would ensure that no negative impacts derive from activities within the buffer zone? Regarding the concept of an additional protected zone, could the State Party provide explanations on whether regulating measures are in place and how they should be implemented to ensure that this additional 'buffer' performs its function effectively?***

The Central Region Administration is the principal organization for the implementation of the Integrated Management Plan through its various departments. The Ministry of Public Works is responsible for urban and construction development at a national level, providing policy and guidelines for Eritrea's six regional administrations. The National Commission for UNESCO is under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. The Cultural and Natural Heritage Proclamation was therefore enacted by the Ministry of Education. The Commission for Culture and Sports is responsible for all cultural and sports sector development. All the above mentioned authorities are national institutions that provide policies, guidelines and supervision and they collaborate with the Central Region Administration and involve to some extent in the implementation of the Integrated Management Plan.

The Central Region Administration is in charge of all preservation activities within its jurisdiction (see annex the organizational structure in the *Integrated Management Plan* (2016)). Under the Central Region Administration, the Department of Public Works Development (DPWD) is one of the key departments dealing with urban development, infrastructure, maintenance of road networks and pedestrian areas, issuing building permits for new and old buildings, supervision of construction works for the entire city and technical archival documentation.

To implement its duties the DPWD has three divisions:

- Building and Supervision Division
- Roads and Maintenance Division, and
- Urban Planning Division.

These three divisions have their own defined roles and responsibilities. The Building and

Supervision Division is responsible for building design and permits, issuing various construction permits including occupation permits; monitoring and supervising construction work and compliance with building regulations. The Roads and Maintenance Division is responsible for maintenance of existing and new road works; traffic management; installation of traffic signage and street lighting. The Urban Planning Division is in charge of developing regional and city wide urban development strategies and the implementation programme; collecting and analyzing relevant data on planning, socio-economics, and demographics, that are essential for urban development planning; surveying and mapping works, and the collection and compilation of data on historical buildings.

The DPWD is a well-established planning and technical department and equipped with a diversity of professionals including architects, engineers, urban planners and other experts specializing in the built environment. Within the DPWD there are a range of different teams with specialist skills and focuses, including urban planning, conservation, archiving, surveying, cartography, and inspection. The department is responsible for urban development activities, building construction for new and old buildings, infrastructure provision at regional and city level. The scope of the mandate of this department is beyond the nominated property, buffer and protected zone. The newly established agency 'Asmara Heritage Project' (AHP) is responsible for the preparation of the Nomination Dossier for inscription on the World Heritage List, the Integrated Management Plan (IMP) and Conservation Master Plan (see Annex the organizational structure in the IMP). The IMP also proposes to expand the mandate of AHP in supervising and monitoring the nominated property.

***Apart from legal protection, could the State Party explain how the different levels of planning instruments and regulations mentioned in the nomination dossier integrate each other in order to ensure the Asmara's heritage values and the proposed Outstanding Universal Value and Asmara urban landscape are protected and transmitted to the future?***

As mentioned in the Nomination Dossier and the Integrated Management Plan (IMP), there are different levels of planning instrument to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property. The Strategic Urban Development Plan (SUDP, 2006) objectives are to define the future expansion trends of the Greater Asmara Area (GAA) over a 20 years horizon (2005-2025), define strategies for controlling spontaneous expansion of the city and surrounding areas, define new city centers, industrial, commercial, administrative areas and identify areas suitable for the construction of dwelling houses and define strategies for preserving the historic character of the city. The SUDP offers multi-sector strategies, a vision of Asmara by 2025, and the implementation arrangements in terms of institutional and financial consideration.

The Outline Urban Planning Regulation (OUPR) is the principal tool associated with SUDP application. The purpose of the OUPR is to control land use and building conditions in the GAA. The regulation applies to all actors: public and private. It applies to the GAA territory, which is divided into zones, with different land use requirements and building regulations for each of these zones. The OUPR subdivided the historic perimeter into four subzones:

- City Centre
- Commercial district
- Medeber and
- Residential Administrative sub zones



The OUPR has provided adequate protection planning regulation to conserve the main characteristics of urban space: building height, setback, built up area, land uses and character of the site. The specific bylaws outlined in the OUPR regarding the nominated property (Historic Perimeter) are in Annex 2 of the *Nomination Dossier* pp.578-590.

“Planning Initiative for the Historic Perimeter of Asmara” was prepared in 2003. This planning document had been prepared exclusively to preserve and conserve the historic perimeter of Asmara and provides guidelines for conservation measures: preserve the existing historic character, the layout of building, the volume, scale, materials and colors of building, which must be in harmony with the adjacent built environment. Buildings are categorized according to their degree of intervention.

Although the 1938 Asmara Building Regulation (Regolamento Edlizio) is old, there are still key elements that are applicable to the nominated property, for example, limiting the height of buildings, setbacks, construction materials, internal and external space, balconies, fixtures, decoration, etc. Since independence this regulation as transitional instrument has been considered valid by the city administration and used as background material for any decision inside the nominated property.

Asmara Planning Norms and Technical Regulation (2015) is a tool for the implementation of the general detailed Conservation Master Plan for the nominated property. This regulation is still under development and expected to be finalized by 2017. The objective of the Asmara Planning Norms and Technical Regulation is to regulate the conservation and valorisation of the nominated property. These have been developed to protect, conserve and safeguard the nominated property, buffer and protected zone. The management process will be guided by the established managing authority, guaranteeing informed participation of the citizens in the decision making process. The Asmara Planning Norms and Technical Regulation has been developed in harmony with the Cultural and Natural Heritage Legislation specifically to serve as planning tools for the nominated site.

The Strategic Urban Development Plan (SUDP) and Outline Urban Planning Regulation (OUP) are planning instrument which guide urban, housing and infrastructure development at the city level and the surrounding territory. These key planning documents of the city recognized the urban heritage qualities and provision made for protection measures to historical buildings and urban space. The SUDP and OUPR used the *1938 Building Regulation* and the “*Planning Initiative for the Historic Perimeter of Asmara, 2003*” as background materials. Therefore, these planning instruments and regulations have been maintained and granted the authenticity and integrity of the nominated property until now. With the new Asmara Planning Norms and Technical Regulation (2017) put in effect by next year, it will enforce and improve governance of the nominated property. Moreover, the IMP offers the framework for the proper management of the Outstanding Universal Value of the site and ensures they are conserved, valorized and transferred to future generations.

***The nomination dossier mentions different plans and an Integrated Management Plan (IMP - 2016). Could the State Party detail whether the plan has been completed, approved and enforced or, if not, by when it will enter into force?***

The Integrated Management Plan (IMP, 2016-2021) for Asmara: Africa’s Modernist City has been prepared by involving various stakeholders and was completed in January 2016. The aim of IMP is to promote the sustainable management of the nominated site so that the OUV, and the integrity and

the authenticity are conserved over time and transferred to future generation. The IMP has been endorsed by the concerned institutions: Ministry of Education, Commission of Culture and Sports and the Central Region Administration **in September 2016**.

*Additionally, could the State Party clearly explain how the IMP relates to any existing planning instruments already in place for the nominated property and for the buffer zone, as well as what is the legal basis for the IMP, that is to say, whether there is any law, decree, regulations or other legal means that makes mandatory the implementation of the IMP?*

Eritrea has a strong tradition of town planning compared to other African countries. Most of cities and towns have master plans to guide urban and infrastructure development. In our Nomination Dossier and Management Plan, we have explained extensively the various master plans produced and their contribution to create and protect Asmara's unique urban landscape. We described the various urban plans, planning and building regulations that have been prepared at various points in time and are presented in the IMP document chronologically. For further information see Annex Vol.1, pp.28-42.

The IMP has been prepared based on an integrated approach, taking into account existing policies, strategies and planning instruments related to urban heritage conservation and management. The main strategies envisaged for the effective implementation of the IMP is the need for the Conservation Master Plan, Asmara Planning Norms and Technical Regulation to protect and conserve and manage the OUVs of the nominated property. The IMP key priority areas are:

1. The integrated conservation plan;
2. Maintenance of historic Buildings;
3. Infrastructures and services rehabilitation and recovery;
4. Mobility and traffic;
5. Socio-economic development pressure;
6. Tourism and visitor management;
7. Protected areas (zones);
8. Risk preparedness and disaster mitigation;
9. Institutional capacity;
10. Financial resources.

The Asmara Heritage Project (AHP) has been working to prepare the Conservation Master Plan, Asmara Planning Norms and Technical Regulation since 2014 (see Annex Vol. 1, pp.392-418). These two documents are under preparation and it planned to be finalized in March-June, 2017. The completion of these two planning instruments will provide a framework and additional legal basis for conserving the urban and architectural heritage of the nominated property, and the buffer and protected zones.

In addition, the Cultural and Natural Heritage Proclamation (CNHP) of 2015 (p.251) under article 25.2, the Ministry of Education has the power to develop the management and implementation plan for the protected site in consultation with relevant bodies, communities and/or user groups. The

CNHP one of the many objectives is to establish an integrated management of Cultural and Natural Heritage of Eritrea for present and future generations. Hence, our national proclamation has made provision to develop an integrated management plan for culturally significant sites.

***Could the State Party explain if the management system/ institutional framework created a new body or identified an existing one and appropriate administrative instrument to ensure that any planning provisions or project development do not have an adverse impact on the proposed OUV, integrity and authenticity of the nominated property?***

The Central Region Administration (CRA) is the regional government body in charge of all preservation and conservation activities within its jurisdiction (see Annex the organizational structure in the *Integrated Management Plan* (2016) in p.88). Under the CRA, the Department of Public Works Development (DPWD) is one of the key departments dealing with urban development, issuing building permits for new and historical buildings, supervision of construction works infrastructure, maintenance of road networks and pedestrian areas and technical archival documentation for the entire city. The DPWD has administrative procedures to issue building construction permits in the nominated area and the rest of the city. It also controls and monitors urban development projects within the nominated site and protect adverse impacts on the proposed OUV, and the integrity and authenticity of the nominated property. Furthermore, the city administration imposed a moratorium of urban development projects that have negative impact on the built urban environment since 1997. This moratorium is temporary and it will be lifted when the appropriate planning instruments are put in place by the Conservation Master Plan and the Asmara Planning Norms and Technical Regulation. For further information see Annex Vol.1, pp.87-99.

***The nomination dossier mentions (p.381) that an institutional framework/ 'focal organ' need to be created for the overall management of the property. It also describes the different bodies with responsibilities at different levels and for different tasks within the city of Asmara.***

The IMP document outlines different institutions that have been involved in the cultural and natural heritage of the city. However, as indicated previously, the government of Eritrea and the Central Regional Administration has decided a “Focal Organ” needs to be created. The newly created organ will be institutionalized very soon and will be responsible for performing its functions. The institution will interact with different institutions at different levels, especially during the implementing of the IMP (action projects) as mandated by the Cultural and Natural Heritage Proclamation (Proclamation No. 177/2015). The Asmara Heritage Project was established with a mandate to carry out the necessary research and documentation required for the preparation of the Nomination Dossier, the IMP, the Conservation Master Plan, and the Asmara Planning Norms and Technical Regulation. The IMP proposes to expand the mandate of the AHP to have a broader responsibility to manage the proposed World Heritage Site.

***Could the State Party explain whether a final decision has been taken with regard to the managing body of the nominated property, which is its mandate and means to perform its functions, and how it will interact with other relevant agencies, administrations and bodies responsible for different tasks?***



As we mentioned above, currently the Department of Public Works Development and Asmara Heritage Project (AHP) are responsible bodies for managing the nominated property. According to the proclamation no.177/2015 has outlined for the implementation of the legal instrument, it required to establish the following organs: a) the Eritrean Cultural and Natural Heritage board, b) the managing board, and c) various committees. Our proclamation has enacted very recently, undoubtedly it needs time and resources. The managing body has not yet established at national level and it is expected to be materialized by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with Commission for Culture and Sports.

The envisaged core organ (Asmara Heritage Center) will have revised organizational structure to reflect the basic structural organs and mandate specified in the CNHP. In IMP document page 99, fig.6.6 proposed revised organizational structure of the managing body for the nominated property. It has outlined how will interact with various administration bodies and relevant agencies. For additional information refer to annex v1. Page 89-100.

***Could the State Party provide additional information on how the HUL concept - which is to be understood as an approach rather than a property category - is being incorporated into the overall planning system for Asmara beyond the boundaries of the nominated property and of its buffer zone, in order to ensure that the proposed OUV and its attributes are not negatively impacted upon by activities or developments that may take place outside the nominated property and its buffer zone.***

The concept of the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) is mentioned in the Integrated Management Plan (IMP, 2016) and the Draft Urban Conservation Master Plan documents. The Urban Conservation Master Plan of Asmara (UCMP) has taken into consideration the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) recommendation proposed by UNESCO (2011). The fundamental goal of the HUL approach is the extension of the concept of conservation beyond the historic cities (nominated property and to guarantee the proper conservation or safeguarding of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), authenticity and integrity of the nominated property that are an integral part of the natural landscape as it has evolved over time.

The AHP understands the interpretation of the HUL concept and it does not propose a new category for inscription, but rather an approach being integrated with the overall conservation planning system of Asmara in order to safeguard and ensure the protection of the proposed OUV and its attributes from any negative and adverse impacts in the future.

The Conservation Master Plan approach is therefore not intended to ‘freeze’ Asmara in its present state, but rather create the conditions through which the city can develop and thrive while retaining and enhancing the urban heritage values through the implementation of appropriate management, planning interventions, and guidelines based on the accurate identification and evaluation of all the components of the historic urban landscape.

The UCMP of Asmara has adopted the methodological approach of the Historic Urban Landscape recommendation. Collectively, the HUL comprises the nominated property (encompassing the perimeter of the proposed World Heritage area), the buffer zone and the protected zone of the surrounding natural landscape. In order to protect these three layers, the following methods are applied:

- Based on multidisciplinary studies;
- Based on architectural, urban planning, archaeological, historical, technical, sociological, and economic analyses, and should define the main objectives and procedures to be adopted at the legal, administrative and financial levels;
- Identifying the buildings, structures and spaces to be protected and preserved either partially or in their integrity or under specified conditions. In special cases, it is necessary also to identify those that should be reorganized, replaced or demolished;
- Rigorously document and report the state of conservation and deterioration of buildings, structures and spaces before identifying any intervention.

Furthermore, in-depth research on historical, socio-economic and physical analyses of the nominated property and surrounding landscape. The analytical approaches are:

- a. Historical Analyses: inventory of historical sources and documentation; history of urban development and synthesis of existing heritage representing different periods.
- b. Physical Analyses: cartographic and topographic updating; typological analysis of buildings, the urban image, street fronts and fences; typological analysis of streets and open areas; survey of the state of conservation and deterioration of buildings and urban fabric.
- c. Socio-economic Analyses: current state and residential needs; needs of public and private services; present state of non-residential use and compatibility of activities; needs technological infrastructures; and needs of traffic, circulation and parking.

The AHP has been working since 2014 to develop the UCMP, the Planning Norms and Regulations as a principal tool for the management of the nominated property. These two documents are currently under extensive development. Much of the data has been collected and analyzed, and the final report of the study will be ready by 2017. For further information refer the draft UCMP in Annex Vol.1 pp.393-456.