
Historical Monuments of Mtskheta (Georgia)

No 708 Bis

1 Basic data

State Party

Georgia

Name of property

Historical Monuments of Mtskheta

Location

City of Mtskheta

Region of Mtskheta-Mtianeti

Georgia

Inscription

1994

Brief description

The historic churches of Mtskheta, former capital of Georgia, are outstanding examples of medieval religious architecture in the Caucasus. They show the high artistic and cultural level attained by this ancient kingdom.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

10 March 2017

2 Issues raised

Background

The Historic Monuments of Mtskheta were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1994 on the basis of cultural criteria (iii) and (iv), under the name of 'City-Museum Reserve of Mtskheta'.

In 2002, the World Heritage Committee requested the State Party to invite a UNESCO-ICOMOS mission to visit the site in response to ongoing constructions and degradations at the site (Decision CONF 202 21B.46). Following the report of that mission, the World Heritage Committee urged the State Party to prepare a detailed map of the property and buffer zone, amongst other matters (Decision 28 COM 15B.69). Following progress with this mapping, the World Heritage Committee requested the State Party to submit a boundaries clarification document and, if relevant, a boundaries modification proposal (Decision 32 COM 7B.90).

The World Heritage Committee included the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2009 because of serious concerns about the state of conservation of the property, and also noted the lack of documents clarifying

the boundaries and buffer zone (Decisions 33 COM 7B.102 and 33 COM 8C.1). The World Heritage Committee subsequently adopted a Desired State of Conservation for the property for its future removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger including, in particular clearly marked boundaries and a buffer zone precisely identified, and implementation of the Urban Land-Use Master Plan (Decision 34 COM 7A.27).

The property boundaries were clarified by the State Party in response to the Retrospective Inventory (Decision 36 COM 8D).

By Decision 40 COM 7A.29, the World Heritage Committee:

5. *Decides to remove the Historical Monuments of Mtskheta (Georgia) from the List of World Heritage in Danger;*

6. *Recommends that the State Party take into consideration the recommendations provided by the 2015 and 2016 World Heritage Centre technical assistance missions, and by ICOMOS, notably to:*

a) *Strengthen the strategic spatial planning vision and ensure that the urban dimension of the property be fully reflected in the policies, measures and tools adopted to ensure the conservation of the latter, using if necessary the approach carried by the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011),*

b) *Address the governance issue at the local level in order to ensure adequate planning, efficient management and decision making,*

c) *Pursue a stakeholder involvement strategy and methodology, together with communication tools,*

d) *Review the administrative borders especially in relation to the Jvari site,*

in order to finalize and implement the ULUMP including supportive land use regulations, and a management plan, and also continue to ensure the long term conservation of monuments and archaeological sites through the development of adequate plans and restoration programmes;

7. *Welcomes the establishment of a unified buffer zone, encompassing the landscape surrounding the components, including in particular the panorama along the rivers and the mountain setting and requests the State Party to provide this enlarged buffer zone with appropriate protection, and to submit a minor boundary modification proposal of the unified buffer zone of the property to the World Heritage Centre;*

8. *Also welcomes the initiative of the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission to the property to assess the implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations;*

Also requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2017, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 41st session in 2017.

During this long process, there were a number of missions, mission reports and State of Conservation Reports, which contributed to the deliberations of the World Heritage Committee.

Modification

The State Party proposes a modified buffer zone for the property in recognition that the current buffer zone is too small, and is not sufficient to protect the property. The buffer zone will increase substantially from 8.73 ha to 2,382.5 ha. The proposal provides a unified buffer zone for the three components of the property, and encompasses the landscape surrounding the components including the panorama along the rivers and mountain setting.

The development of the modified buffer zone is the result of a process including the integrated Site Management Plan (2012), previously submitted to the World Heritage Centre, the Pilot Study of the Mtskheta Cultural Landscape (2014), the Mtskheta Urban Land Use Master Plan (2016), and the use of GIS tools.

ICOMOS acknowledges that the modified buffer zone is a major improvement compared to the existing situation, and should enable the protection of the property.

The modified buffer zone strengthens the multi-stakeholder, integrated management of the property introduced through the Site Management Plan. However, no additional management instruments are proposed, and the inter-ministerial committee led by the Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection of Georgia will manage the modified buffer zone in accordance with the Site Management Plan.

The proposed buffer zone does not have a single character, including as it does both old and new town areas, as well as rural areas. In order to effectively manage the buffer zone, specific provisions are required to address the different areas. This should be undertaken as part of the elaboration of the Mtskheta Urban Land Use Master Plan. For example, in the case of the historic town, provisions might address future building activity relating to height, mass and materials, as well as future uses, areas where new construction is prohibited, archaeological zones, and rehabilitation areas. Measures might be specified for the future rectification of existing buildings, which are inconsistent with the protection of the property.

In addition, the medium to long term future social and development aspirations within and outside the historic town should be considered and properly planned within the context of protection of the property.

The Minister of Culture and Monuments Protection of Georgia adopted by decree the Unified Visual Protection Area (Buffer Zone) of the Historical Monuments of Mtskheta in 2016. This is as an Individual Visual Protection Area under the national Law of Georgia on Cultural Heritage (2007). It is intended this will provide an additional layer of protection, promote rehabilitation of degraded parts of the landscape, and prevent inadequate interventions. All intervention proposals within the buffer zone are to be forwarded by the local municipality to the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia for consideration and approval.

While this additional layer of protection is welcome, it also appears to leave in place the other protective instruments and mechanisms. This creates the possibility that protection may not be fully integrated. Consideration should be given to harmonising the range of instruments and mechanisms to ensure integrated and comprehensive protection.

The protection and management of the property requires close monitoring at least when the new buffer zone is implemented.

ICOMOS considers the modified buffer zone is adequate and appropriate for the protection of the property. However, the Mtskheta Urban Land Use Master Plan needs to be elaborated through specific provisions to address the management of different areas. The range of protective instruments and mechanisms should also be reviewed to ensure integrated and comprehensive protection, and the protection and management of the property should be closely monitored, at least for an initial period.

3 ICOMOS Recommendations

Recommendation with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed buffer zone for Historical Monuments of Mtskheta, Georgia, **be approved.**

Additional recommendations

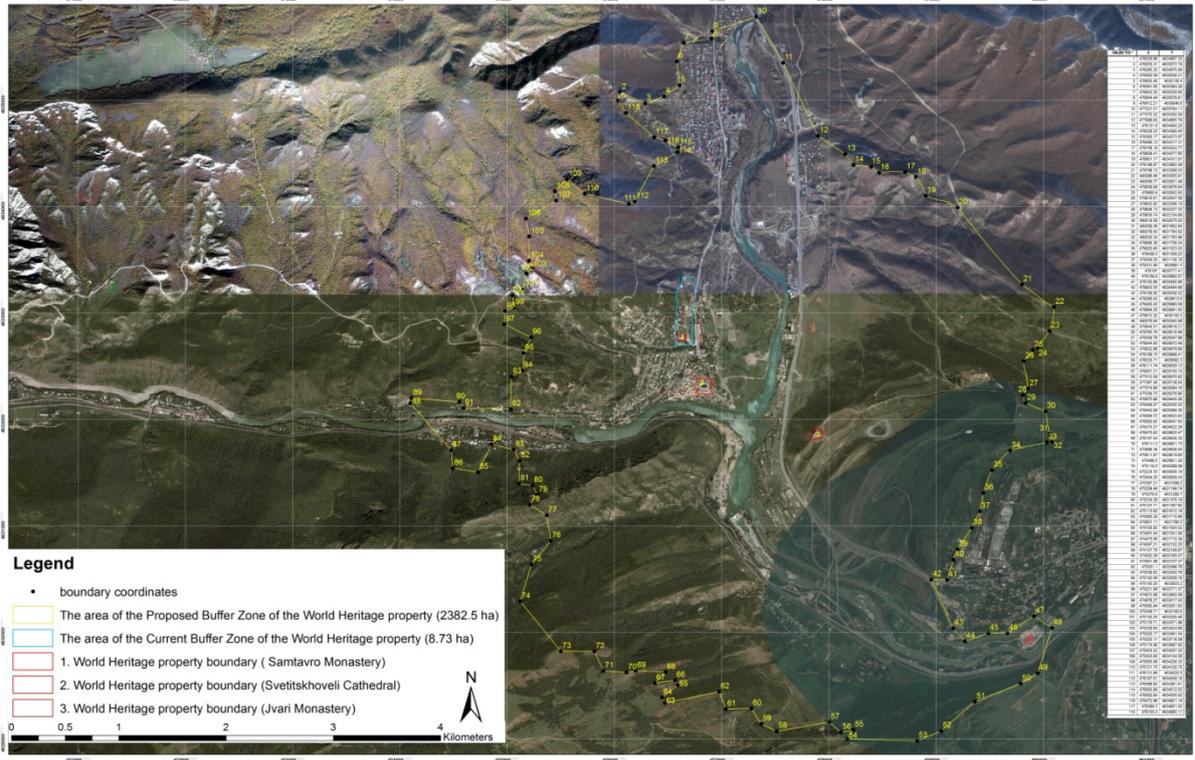
ICOMOS recommends that the State Party gives consideration to the following:

- a) Elaborating the Mtskheta Urban Land Use Master Plan through specific provisions to address the management of different areas,
- b) Reviewing the range of protective instruments and mechanisms to ensure integrated and comprehensive protection;

ICOMOS recommends, if a joint ICOMOS/ICCROM reactive monitoring mission is organised, to assess the effectiveness of management of the modified buffer zone.

ICOMOS recommends also the State Party be requested to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 2018, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 43rd session in 2019.

Proposed Buffer Zone of the World Heritage property. Historical Monuments of Mtskheta



Map showing the proposed buffer zone