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30 December 2017

Ms Mechtild Rössler
Director
World Heritage Centre
Culture Sector
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UNESCO
7 Place de Fontency
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France

Dear Madam,

Le Morne Cultural Landscape- State of Conservation Report 2017

Please find enclosed the updated State of Conservation Report of Le Morne Cultural Landscape. You may wish to note that UNESCO may publish the said report on its website.

Mauritius, as a State Party to the World Heritage Convention, has always respected its obligations and will continue to do so as it represents the pride of Mauritius and the dignity of the population, both at national and international levels.

We seize this opportunity to thank you personally once again for your kind collaboration.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ramrukheea', written over a horizontal line.

Mrs R. Ramrukheea
Permanent Secretary

2017

The Ministry of Arts and Culture

The Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund

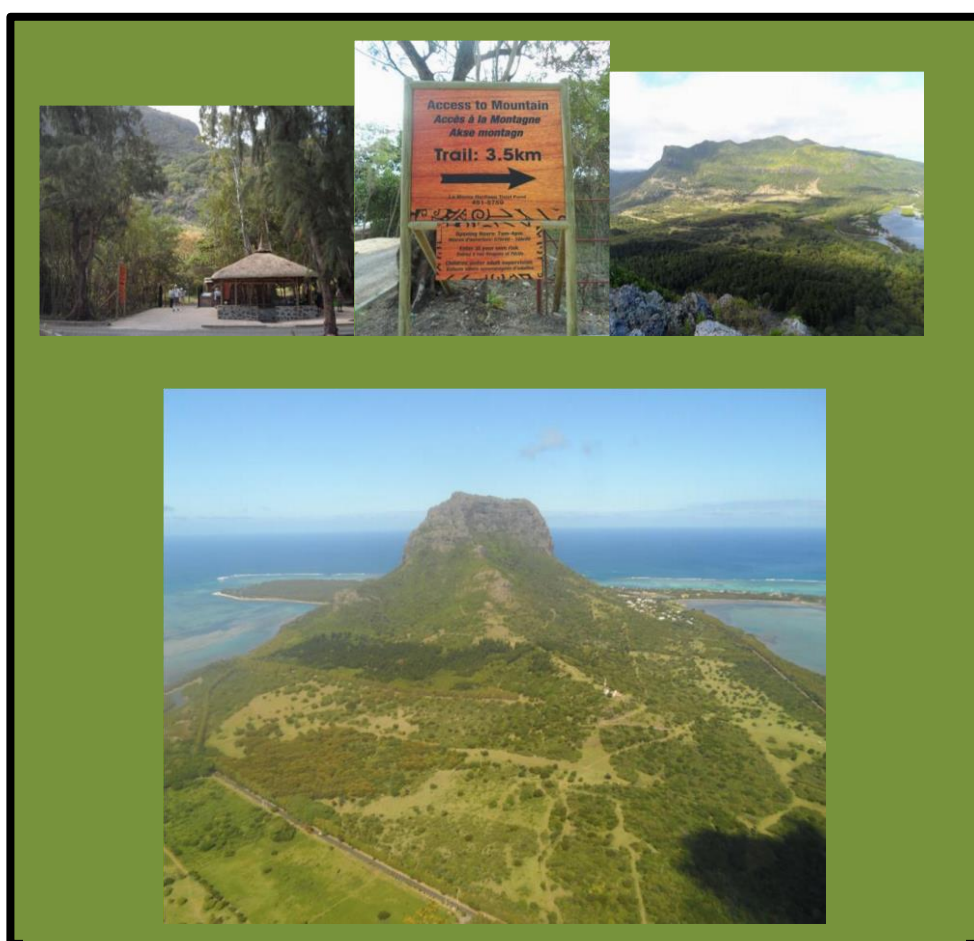
The Republic of Mauritius



LE MORNE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY

(MAURITIUS)

(Ref: 1259bis)



STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT

December 2017

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List of Acronyms

CRSI	Centre for Research on Slavery and Indenture
DCP	Decentralized Cooperation Programme
GEF	Global Environment Facility
HSBC	Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
LED	Local Economic Development
LMCL	Le Morne Cultural Landscape
LMHTF	Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund
MoHL	Ministry of Housing and Lands
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHF	National Heritage Fund
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
PPG2	Planning Policy Guidance 2
SICOM	State Insurance Company of Mauritius
SOC	State of Conservation Report
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UOM	University of Mauritius
WHP	World Heritage Property
WHL	World Heritage List
WHS	World Heritage Site
WHP	World Heritage Property

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In view of preserving the Authenticity and Integrity of LMCL, the State party of Mauritius is increasingly putting tremendous effort in the management and conservation of the Property. The Outstanding Universal Value is considered as the most important factor in any development to ensure the protection the Core and Buffer Zone in line with ICOMOS recommendations on the property's inscription on the WHL.

Since the submission of the 2016 State of Conservation Report, major progress has been achieved on the landscape. The opening of an access to the Le Morne Brabant Mountain is no doubt one of the major positive developments concretized by the State Party for the benefit of the population. The interest to visit such places of significance should be seen as positive as it does not only recognize the heritage alone, but also the work carried out by the management of such places to create and maintain places of interest and self-satisfaction. As such, all the necessary amenities have been put in place to respect and make proper use of the mountain and its various value resources for the convenience of all without undermining its unique position as a heritage of OUV and therefore a WHP. A Visitor Management Plan has been developed for the effective management of the property with regards to visitor pressure and to be able to provide the services required while maintaining the health and values of the property.

The powerful symbol of resistance to slavery associated to the landscape, its strong sense of place and layers of history continues to attract and fascinate large number of visitors and researchers for multiple interests such as education, enjoyment, leisure, spiritual nourishment and adventure. It is so unique that it was deemed worthy of being the international symbol that embodies a powerful set of human values, similar and no less important than the Robben Island Cultural Landscape which 'celebrates the triumph of the human spirit over adversity'. This strong similarity has led to the signature of a Twinning Agreement between Le Morne Cultural Landscape and Robben Island Museum in South Africa, to unlock various opportunities between the two WHS through an established programme of activity.

Research is an ongoing activity and touches different parts of the landscape such as the site of Makak, Trou Chenille and even the seascape through maritime archaeology to have a deeper insight on the history of the overall landscape that is also contributing in enhancing the various attributes of the site, hence maintaining its OUV. The State Party remains guided by its Management Plans and Strategic Plan, used as the main reference documents and road map in order implement the vision and mission for LMCL. Furthermore, despite the challenges highlighted in this report, the State Party is aware that realizing the full potential of the property requires strong focus on the economic development that needs to be continually explored for the benefit of the Mauritian people and the local communities. Hence, various strategies are being developed to achieve that.

1.0 Introduction

At its 40th session (Istanbul 2016), the World Heritage Committee examined the 2nd State of Conservation of the Le Morne Cultural Landscape **(Mauritius) (C1259 bis)**. This report is a follow up of the 2nd report submitted by the State Party in February 2016. It is based on the Committee Decision **40 COM 7B.14** concerning this property to submit an updated report on the state of conservation of LMCL and on the implementation of its recommendations. The previous report (February 2016) highlighted amongst others, the Reactive Monitoring Mission carried out by UNESCO between January and February 2016, the ongoing collaborative research conducted by LMHTF and UOM on maroon archaeology, LMHTF staff ongoing training and capacity building, the status of the court case between the Government of Mauritius and LMB, the challenges faced by LMHTF in biodiversity conservation works and how they are overcome and some of the proposed development within the Buffer Zone and how the legal frameworks and management documents are applied to ensure compatible development within the context of the WHP. Consequently, this report provides updated information on the continued effort made by the State Party of Mauritius, represented by the Ministry of Arts and Culture through the LMHTF to ensure that the Authenticity and Integrity of the inscribed property is maintained and even enhanced. To achieve that, in response to the World Heritage Committee's decision, the report presents the major achievements of the LMHTF in terms of activities, events and projects carried out and which are still ongoing such as the opening of access to Le Morne Brabant Mountain, the Twinning Agreement signed between LMCL and RIM, local economic and infrastructural development in Le Morne village, archaeological works carried out in Trou Chenille and Makak, ongoing staff training, biodiversity conservation works, follow up of the court case between the Government of Mauritius and LMB, the major management challenges faced by the State Party and the effective measures taken to deal with them. It also features the progress achieved in terms of land accessibility and legal ownership for the implementation of one of the major and long-awaited projects which is the construction of a museum/interpretation centre on maroonage which will also include a permanent office for LMHTF staff as well as a craft market for the locals.

Another significant planned project highlighted in this report is the creation of an Open Air Museum which will constitute the reconstruction of the former village of Trou Chenille within its original location. For that matter, this also states the purpose of the Advisory Mission of UNESCO in November 2016 highlighted below.

1.1 UNESCO Advisory Mission in Mauritius

Following a request of the State Party, UNESCO was invited for an Advisory Mission in Mauritius which took place from 21st to 24th November 2016. The purpose of the mission was mainly to assist the implementation of Decision: 40 COM 7B.14 focused mainly on how best to manage access to the Le Morne Brabant Mountain and to provide recommendations for the creation of the proposed Open Air Museum. The mission programme consisted of meeting all stakeholders and residents of Le Morne village to discuss the implementation of the above decision and visit on the access trail. The mission was represented by Mr. Edmond Moukala of the World Heritage Centre and Mrs. Liana Jansen from ICOMOS. During their mission, the experts got the opportunity to provide their input on the Risk Management Plan designed to primarily deal with risks associated to visitors visiting the mountain trail and it makes recommendations on the safety precautions. They also perused the Visitor Management Plan developed by Dr. George Abungu, UNESCO expert which they found to be comprehensive and recommendations relevant. UNESCO's experts' recommendations were also gathered on the Expression of Interest (EOI) for the Maintenance of Public Access of Le Morne Brabant Mountain. The EOI has been designed as a matter of good governance for the appointment of a specialist management company to take over all the management of the trail under control of the LMHTF. A mission report which includes recommendations was generated out of this mission and submitted by UNESCO to the State Party. These recommendations are being used by LMHTF to inform decisions for the management of access and in the planning process for the creation of the Open Air Museum. Some of the implemented recommendations are put forward in the next chapters.

2.0 Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

2.1 Decision No.3 (Positive benefits of the property's inscription in terms of historical and cultural identity)

Since its inscription on the WHP, LMCL as a powerful place to commemorate the Resistance to Slavery and its Abolition has witnessed a considerable expansion of knowledge, understanding and appreciation of its values by the Mauritian population as well as the world over. The essence of the mountain captures humanity's unending quest for freedom, liberty and dignity which are ongoing global phenomenon. As such, Le Morne is admirably suited to encourage all people to remember the tragedy of slavery, to acknowledge the resilience of the human spirit in the face of exploitation and oppression and to honour the memory of the men and women who resisted racism, discrimination and intolerance. A clear picture of this manifestation can be seen during the annual event of the Anniversary for the Commemoration of the Abolition of Slavery in Mauritius where Le Morne Brabant Mountain as a natural attribute has become the physical rallying point which continues to attract a huge crowd of people for spiritual nourishment and expression of creativity and continuity during the commemoration. In much fervor, cultural programme of the official ceremony very often lays emphasis on the struggle of the people of African descent, which constitute the Creole population of Mauritius in overcoming the challenges of life since the Abolition of Slavery, the fight for social justice and recognizance and the continued struggle and success of the population. The annual Festival International Kreol is another festival which regroups crowd of Mauritian population and targets tourists to promote the rich culture and authenticity of Mauritius through the local music, arts, language and cuisine that forms part of our intangible cultural heritage. LMHTF, since 10 years now, is an active partner in the organization and promotion of the Traditional Mauritian Segga Tipik, and most activities are organised in Le Morne village which has become a reference point for this event. The Traditional Mauritian Segga which was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (9.COM) since November 2014 is also an attribute which convey the OUV of LMCL WHP. This element of ICH provides a strong sense of identity and continuity to all Mauritians and symbolizes resistance and resilience during slavery and thereafter. It contributes to social cohesion and breaks down cultural and class barriers, creating opportunities for

intercultural encounters and unifying various groups around a shared Mauritian heritage (Nomination File No. 01003). These intrinsic values have fundamental role to play in the building of a multicultural society.

2.2 Decision No. 4 (Effective implementation of the LMHTF Management Plans)

As stated in the previous reports, LMHTF has in place an effective and adequate legal and management framework in order to ensure that the OUV is protected in line with the World Heritage Convention 1972 and to achieve a sound and sustainable development. The management plans which include the Integrated Management plan as the lead document and a bundle of separate sub plans which include the

Land Management Plan, Lagoon Management Plan and Local Economic

Development Plan have all been reviewed, updated, vetted and finalized in 2017. The reviewed plans are now reinforced with additional information and recommendations following mission visit which the last two years have witnessed. For e.g, amongst others, the lead document addresses concerns on the recommendations of the Reactive Monitoring Mission of UNESCO (January 2016) which is important to be taken into account, the opening of mountain access to the public and the Visitor Management plan. Now strengthened, the Management Plans 2017-2021 which include our Plan of Actions is the road map for the next five years with a Vision for the LMCL as a guiding light to realizing our Strategic Objectives and we shall certainly do all in our power to stay on this road and to attain our goals for the five-year period. Given that the management plans guide our day to day operations, implementations of the plan of action is an ongoing process. Some key examples of these pursuits include the annual sensitization, education and awareness building on LMCL through outreach programs extended to all primary schools of Rodrigues in 2016 and 2017, workshop for the Buffer Zone Management Committee members to strengthen capacity as a functional body to assess proposed development projects on LMCL, staff capacity building and training are being continuously developed, staff is being recruited as and when required, a research plan is in place and research works are still ongoing, access to the mountain was finally opened, a Risk Management Plan and a Visitor Management Plan have been developed for the mountain access and a technical committee has been set up for the construction of a museum/interpretation center on

maroonage, a permanent office for LMHTF and a craft market for the local community. Furthermore, as the management authority for the protection of LMCL, the LMHTF Act 2004 is currently under review to strengthen the status of LMCL in the national legislation as recommended in the Management Plan.

The Management Plans have been reviewed by the parent Ministry and Government approval will soon be obtained for their tabling at the National Assembly.

As a statutory requirement for all government bodies, LMHTF has developed a 3-year Strategic Plan (2016-2019) which embraces the existing management plans. A comprehensive strategic report was generated out of two intensive days of workshop with Board members and overall staff of LMHTF, led by a local consultant where ideas, proposals and suggestions were formulated and integrated into the plan. Some of the activities outlined in the plan on a yearly basis include amongst others; rebranding of LMCL with logo and slogan, villager's empowerment through education and training, local regional and international collaboration, marketing strategies for LMHTF and the site, generation of revenue through cultural tourism and sports, richness of ICH and collaborations and joint ventures with other partners. The plan implementation has started already and one of the recent major recommendations emerging from this plan is the Twinning Agreement between Le Morne Cultural Landscape and Robben Island Museum held in Cape Town in March 2017. This twinning agreement is based on the acknowledgement that both WHS are tied in a common tragic history of deprivation of fundamental freedoms of man as symbols of slavery (LMCL) and apartheid (Robben Island). This partnership between the two parties will help to strengthen the brotherly ties, to enhance the value of the memory of black people, to fight against all forms of oppression and violence and will expand the relations regarding arts and culture between the Participants in accordance with the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Government of the Republic of Mauritius in the Fields of Arts and Culture signed in October 2016. Several activities and programs have been proposed in various fields of cooperation in terms of cultural, heritage management and professional exchanges to share experiences and best practices, educational tours and exchanges, partnership among investors for dynamic cooperation and other programme of activities to celebrate the twinning.

As part of the rebranding, the LMHTF logo has been used as a reference to design a specific logo for the LMCL in view of creating a visual identity for the site. The logo will be used on products to be sold by the institution and for marketing purposes.

2.3 Decision No. 5 (Ways to augment the Management plan to allow for appropriate development by residents of Le Morne village, in terms of settlement space and basic infrastructure needs)

The Local Economic Development Plan is the comprehensive document which covers the challenges faced by the local community and addresses their needs. As such, the issues of land accessibility, lack of land for development and landownership are addressed in the said plan. The Ministry of Housing and Lands is the statutory authority for the management and land use of State Lands in Mauritius. The real challenge regarding settlement space in Le Morne village is connected to the complexity of land ownership which comprises of a vast majority of private land and leased land for deer estate farming which according to the MoHL after a survey, some places are unsuitable for settlement due to its slopy aspect and existence of high tension lines. The village is restricted to a thin strip of land, hence there is actually very limited alternative for settlement space in the village.

The LED Plan is acting as a major reference instrument that leads to an improved quality of life in the village. The Plan highlights several areas of priority intervention put forward by the inhabitants such as no proper toilet system by some families. This has enabled donors like the UNDP, SICOM, HSBC, DCP, US Embassy and GEF to fund a project for the construction of toilet facilities for 34 deprived households of the village. The LMHTF along with the regrouped active NGOs of the village provided their full support for the successful implementation of this project. Other recent major infrastructural development projects that relate to the village include coastal protection works to combat the beach erosion problem by the Ministry of Environment and improvement of the existing drainage system at the back of the village by the Black River District Council.

Employment and capacity building is one of the issues raised by the inhabitants in the LED plan. To alleviate this, LMHTF usually collaborate with the nearby hotels to identify potential young unemployed of the village to benefit training and recruitment programme in hotel industry. LMHTF also facilitates employment information session for the inhabitants in its office to create employment opportunities in various industries depending on their capacity. Social development is an ongoing process ranging from short to long term of up to 10 years. Other socially integrated projects are planned for the future and LMHTF is encouraging active partnership of potential stakeholders to contribute in the sustainable development of the LMCL.

LMHTF strongly believes that in addition to basic infrastructure needs, the human development is a vital factor especially while involving the youth so as contribute to invaluable and positive youth development and promote social learning, all of which are essential in a world where we aspire to promote a culture of peace, creativity and innovation. The United Nations Culture and Youth Development highlights that transmitting heritage values to young people favors intercultural understanding, respect for cultural diversity and helps create an environment propitious to a culture of peace. As such LMHTF has recently initiated a school for traditional Mauritian Sega Tipik and a Theater school in its office which unites some 30 young persons of the village aged between 9 to 15 years. These young people are coached by professionals, for e.g a famous sega singer from the village, Mr. Frico Labelle. The young people very often take part in cultural activities organized by the LMHTF at local and national level, including the annual Commemoration of the Abolition of Slavery on the 01st of February in Mauritius and they are planned to take part in the annual Festival International Kreol in Rodrigues Island in December 2017. This also supports the endeavour of the Mauritian government in ensuring the safeguarding of the Traditional Mauritian Sega Tipik on the Representative List of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage under the 2003 Convention through intergenerational transmission.

2.4 Decision No. 6 (Collaborative research on maroon Archaeology and desirability of the Makak site having public access for visitors)

It is to be highlighted that during its Reactive Monitoring Mission report done in 2016, experts from UNESCO have also recommended pursuing efforts to gain access to Makak for a detailed archaeological research, without which a critical part of the history of Le Morne will remain unknown. Continuous historical and archaeological research is one of our main concerns in line with two of the main objectives of the LMHTF as per the LMHTF Act 2004 as follow:

- to encourage research and support projects and publications related to slavery and maroonage;
- to collect, publish, and disseminate information pertaining to the history of slavery and marronage

Ongoing research is being undertaken to bring to light the history of the region. Collaboration with the CRSI of the UOM and the NHF have been established to pursue our mission statement by becoming a centre of excellence in terms of research, in particular the history of maroons in the wider context of slavery in a credible, scientific and professional way.

The Cultural Heritage Value of the LMCL is rich, complex and composite, consisting of tangible as well as intangible heritage. LMHTF undertakes research work in line with the history and importance of the site.

Makak, based on oral history is known to be one of the main settlement areas after the abolition of slavery and is located at the foot of the mountain and the slopes down towards the sea. At present, the site is subdivided by temporary fenced zones used for deer grazing and hunting.

As highlighted in the previous SOC report, the archaeological reconnaissance survey of 2007 was carried out by a local archaeologist and a report with recommendations was

generated. This was followed by further observation of the site and analysis of the archaeologist Dr. Chip Colwell in 2010 who even published a paper (Colwell Chip et al, 2014. *The Search for Makak: A Multidisciplinary Settlement History of the Northern Coast of Le Morne Brabant, Mauritius*). The research has enabled LMHTF to sketch a portrait of the Lieu dit and much information was gathered. But more archaeological investigation at Makak was required for a deeper understanding of the history and settlement of LMCL. As such, in July 2017, the Société du Morne Brabant has been collaborative by allowing access to the site for further archaeological research at Makak. The research was undertaken by LMHTF team with the collaboration of the NHF and MoHL which provided technical expertise for the survey and mapping of the site for a better understanding.

During this two weeks' field investigation, several methods were used such as: systematic field walking, excavation of 3 test trenches, topographical survey, photographic & video documentation and cartographic research.

Archaeological report hypothesizes that there are traces of settlement within the area after the abolition of slavery in Mauritius. One important enigma meant to be solved was the extent of the site. No exact boundary lines can be set yet, but it is quite safe to say that the core of the site runs from the ancient road feature, to its west, at the foot of Le Morne Brabant Mountain. The contour map also shows that this part of the terrain has a more even and flat surface compared to the slopes and ridges around, thus making the region more suitable for a settlement.

As part of its cultural heritage, the seascape is also being explored as a research ground. With the help of a professional local marine archaeologist, a maritime archaeology is being conducted at the time of writing this report to deepen our understanding and knowledge on use of the seascape which was related not only to maritime maroonage as the "last doors" that maritime maroons would have passed through the open sea in their attempt to return to their homelands of Madagascar or Africa, but was also used as a boat embarkation and disembarkation point during the period when Trou Chenille was inhabited, after the abolition of slavery, as per oral history and could also be a shipwreck ground which needs to be further explored. The lagoon is also worth to be explored in relation to its attributes consisting of two of the reef break channels,

namely 'Passe de la Prairie' and 'Passe d'Ambulante' in the north which are historically significant as entry points through which boats entered at various points in time, including some that carried illegal quarry after the abolition of the slave trade. It is expected that material collection will provide further knowledge and will provide a broader understanding of the history of the landscape and seascape that will contribute to sustain the OUV of the inscribed property.

2.5 Decision No. 7 (Status on the legal challenges associated with the proposed development in the property and access to the World Heritage Property)

The State Law Office has informed the parent Ministry that both parties are still mediating and the case has been called for mention on 09 January 2018 before the Honourable Master and Registrar to be fixed for arguments.

Access to the mountain, which was a pressing issue, is acknowledged to have been longstanding expectation by Mauritians and even foreigners. This issue was also listed as one of the 10 priority imperatives by the LMHTF in its Management Plan. This priority intervention has been achieved with the opening of the access to Le Morne Brabant Mountain in July 2016. A portion of State Land was vested to the Ministry of Arts and Culture by the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the opening of an access that leads to a network of existing trail linked to the first and second plateau of the mountain. Henceforth, visit to the mountain adds to the existing heritage trail around the mountain. The State Party has invested a huge budget in view of putting in place various visitor amenities such as toilet blocks, kiosk, orientation and information panels, upgrading of Trou Chenille access track, benches, bins, gatepost and ropes for climbing. The mountain attracts lots of be it local or from abroad.

This denotes the immense potential of Le Morne in generating revenue through ecotourism, cultural tourism as well as ecological tourism, possibilities on which the State Party is actually exploring to unlock. To achieve this, regulations pertaining to access to the mountain which includes fees to visitors has been finalized. LMHTF is also aware of the potential of the property to provide viable, long term economic operations with socio-economic benefits that tourism can bring. This would include stable

employment, income generating opportunities and social services to local communities which could also contribute to the government of Mauritius vision of poverty eradication. On the flip side of the coin, tourism which is one of the fastest growing industries has the potential to damage the unique cultural and natural resources that sustain it and all appropriate measures are being put in place to avoid this. As such a Visitor Management Plan for the LMCL WHP has been developed by an appointed consultant from UNESCO, Dr. G. Abungu. The purpose of the Visitor Management Plan 2016 - 2021 is to protect the OUV of the LMCL, through ensuring the intactness of all the values, its authenticity and integrity, while at the same time allowing access to the property to communities and visitors for education, enjoyment and personal and group fulfilment, and providing benefit to communities around it, the country and humanity at large. It is meant to regulate in the best way possible access to the property, and the presentation of its values in the process of providing enjoyment, experience, entertainment, education, self and group fulfilment as well as other benefits without harm to the property or those who visit and use it¹. Crucial to this management plan is the visitor counting and survey to inform planning and management purposes. Proper mechanism has been put in place by LMHTF to record visitor statistics on a daily basis and a visitor survey is being carried out. The plan also puts forward the challenges, opportunities, actions in place and/or planned to address challenges and planned actions.

Security and safety is one of the main concerns of LMHTF in the management of a site of such nature, especially with the increasing number of visitors on the mountain. A local and competent firm, namely Outdoor Leadership and Survival School Ltd was appointed by LMHTF to undertake a complete risk assessment of the mountain in November 2016. This has enabled the development of a Risk Management Plan for the mountain. This document analyses the risks linked to the public in general hiking on the established trails up to the metal cross on the upper part of the mountain and the operation of the hiking in general. The different types of trail were graded using the Yosemite Decimal System which contains classes ranging from 1 (Easy) to 5 (Difficult).

¹ LMCL Visitor Management Plan 2017-2021, pg 7

The plan also describes the risks/hazard, the existing control measures, rates the risk and recommends control measures.

However, implementing the recommendations of the visitor management plan and risk management plan is not without challenge. Furthermore, LMHTF lacks capacity in terms of staff numbers and knowledge in staff levels to manage some aspects of the site such as trained guides for mountain hiking, knowledge in wilderness first aid, patient handling over high angle terrain and rope handling and maintenance. To palliate this issue, LMHTF which is authorized under Section 24 (2) (b) of the Public Procurement Act 2006 is in process of appointing through an Expression of Interest, a competent company to manage access to the mountain which will adhere to guidelines of the Planning Policy Guidance 2 and the Visitor Management Plan to maintain and enhance the OUV of the property. As per the planned actions of the Visitor Management Plan, the selected company will have the responsibility to manage the access, create visitor attraction, and work to empower local community in the region through sustainable development and employment opportunities. The Company will need to work according to the scope of project given to them by LMHTF for a period, determined by LMHTF, and agreed by both parties. LMHTF will also put in place, before hiring the company, rules of engagement as well as periodic evaluation mechanisms to ensure that the world heritage is managed as per the UNESCO 1972 Convention and the Operational Guidelines. Having a high potential as a source of revenue, the access to the mountain will be managed by the Company using the fund generated, for management and conservation purposes, hence becoming partly autonomous from government grant.

Furthermore, three guides operating on the mountain were dispensed a short training course on visitor safety, by the Mauritius Police Force and this is benefitting their day-to-day activity.

In the meantime, to maintain protection of the property, the process of implementing parts of the Visitor Management Plan is already in place as the needs and shortfalls continue to be identified. For e.g to control visitors and the access, LMHTF has temporarily hired a Security Service posted on a daily basis from 07.00hrs to 16.00hrs

at the trailhead and section 2 of the trail to control access to this dangerous part. To ensure regular cleaning of the site, the Ministry of Tourism and External Communications is collaborating with the LMHTF by providing general workers on site on a regular basis.

2.6 Decision No. 8 (The WHC encourages the State Party to ensure that LMHTF continues to manage and conserve the property to the fullest possible extent under these circumstances)

The State Party remains guided by its management documents and related development guidelines in line with the UNESCO 1972 Convention to ensure that the LMCL OUV is preserved despite some of the challenges highlighted above. For e.g for effective management of the site, training and capacity building remains an ongoing activity at the LMHTF as and when opportunities exist. As such, the Site Manager and Conservation Officer are currently following a Certificate level course on Protected Area Management from Durrell Conservation Academy funded by the UNDP and initiated by the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security in the context of the Protected Area Network Project. Other training opportunities benefitted by the staff to ensure sound and effective management from both administrative and technical level include training on Archives Administration, Preservation and Records Management, training workshop on Oral History, Classification of Cataloguing documents and training in Procurement Tender Preparation and Evaluation.

To ensure additional layer of protection to the property's attribute, it is worth highlighting that the Old Cemetery of Le Morne was listed on the National Heritage List in April 2016, event which also coincided with the International Day of Monuments and Sites. The site is henceforth, also under statutory protection of the the National Heritage Fund Act 2003.

Management of the LMCL also includes integration and partnership of the key stakeholders. The five hotels of the peninsula are considered as potential stakeholders and donors who are also benefitting from the brand name and world heritage status of Le Morne in attracting tourists from various parts of the world to sell their product.

Consequently, as recommended by UNESCO experts during their last advisory mission in Mauritius, a first donor's meeting was organised in October 2017. This meeting included the five hotel representatives of Le Morne and was convened by the President of the Association des Hôteliers et Restaurateurs de l'île Maurice (AHRIM). The LMHTF seized the opportunity to present its management vision, daily activities and future projects. The meeting, which was the first of its kind, was very positive and the stakeholders have shown keen interest in assisting the LMHTF through sponsorship or providing other appropriate expertise, especially in the reconstruction of the Open Air Museum at Trou Chenille and the proposed Museum/Intepretation Centre for LMCL pertaining to maroonage, provided that the projects are viable and financially sustainable. As recommended, a Business Plan that will be used as a road map to guide our vision has been recommended for the projects.

3.0 Other current conservation issues which may have an impact of the property's OUV

While being widely recognised for its cultural significance, the LMCL has an invaluable richness of both land and marine biological diversity as already acknowledged by ICOMOS and the State Party. It is home to a large number of plant species two of which are endemics to the mountain, namely the *Trochetia Boutoniana* and *Immortelle du Morne*. Furthermore, the mountain ecosystem supports populations of both native and exotic birds, reptiles, invertebrates and mammals. It has been observed that there is a gradual change in the forest ecosystem and native forests cover is decreasing with proliferation of invasive alien species, effect of climate change and fragmentation, a global issue associated with climate change and disruption of the ecosystem. As highlighted in the previous report, the LMHTF is continuously putting tremendous effort in terms of staff training and financial resources to maintain and restore our biological diversity. The State Party is concerned with this issue and concerned governmental departments are gradually increasing efforts to safeguard remnant of biological diversity of the island including the LMCL. Various conservation strategies such as National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan (NBSAP) have been developed and implemented. Another such example is the PAN program which caters

for the restoration of native forests of the island. It is worth highlighting that the PAN Invasive Alien Species project provides the platform and opportunity to protect Mauritius mainland native and rare biodiversity (flora and fauna) through the extension of forest surface benefitting from a protected status and improvement of the management of existing protected areas, including capacity-building to control alien species invasion in native forests.

The biological value of Le Morne is so unique that it deserves to be restored and integrated into the protected area network project to attain our fundamental objective, which is safeguarding our national heritage and increasing native forest cover of the Island of Mauritius. To palliate the issue of insufficient funds for conservation, the recent collaboration between LMHTF and the Ministry of Agro Industry in the context of the PAN program will surely help the LMHTF, not solely in terms of funding to meet one of the fundamental objectives, but also for the creation of local economic development opportunities in terms of employment generation by integrating the community members for a six months period in the project. Through its annual government grant, LMHTF is maintaining its yearly conservation and rehabilitation programme with the active participation of some members of the local community through a Tender exercise. They have benefitted training in conservation works such as weeding, removal of invasive plants through a weeding program and construction of Conservation Management Area.

Often with the need to open places like that for visitation by the public, visitor numbers may create pressure on our natural heritage which may be detrimental to the health of our ecosystem and its cultural values. Negative visitor behaviour such as littering, collection of native plants as ornamentals for home, trampling of native seedlings, picking of plant materials, flowers and seeds and smoking are detrimental factors that have been observed. To fight against these issues, LMHTF has recently worked out a list of do's and don'ts that will be integrated in a particular section of the LMHTF Act which has been looked into by the LMHTF Board. In addition to panels, notice boards have already been fixed on site. A visitor responsible code of conduct is also planned to be designed for visitors. The management company that will be contracted out to

ensure the daily management of the access to the mountain will also be required to take appropriate measures to reinforce protection of our natural heritage.

It is also important to note that a draft Good Practice Guide to Native Vegetation Restoration in Mauritius has been developed under the PAN project. The objective is to inform new and experienced site restoration practitioners about effective practices that can be used as part of an integrated approach to site restoration programme within the Mauritian context. This knowledge product is a key project outcome and also an important tool for the long term sustainability of protected areas which will also benefit LMCL active conservation programs.

Furthermore, LMCL is listed as a potential site for inclusion in the PAN as per the Protected Area Network Expansion Strategy 2017 – 2026. In order to align with the IUCN definition of Protected Area the State Party will be considering either one of the following as also recommended by the National Parks and Conservation Service:

- A change of classification of LMCL from Cultural to Mixed Property;
- The proclamation of the heritage site as a Special Reserve as per the provisions of the Native Terrestrial Biodiversity and National Parks Act 2015; or
- The proclamation of the Mountain Reserve on Le Morne as a Nature Reserve as per the provisions of the Forest and Reserves Act 1983.

It is acknowledged that upgrading the protection status will increase the local and international visibility of LMCL, it is in line with the Protected Area Network Expansion Strategy 2017 – 2026 and will help meet the Aichi Target 11 under the Convention on Biological Diversity. It will also allow the diversification of activities carried out at Le Morne to include conservation of biodiversity therefore, enabling the LMHTF staff benefitting the Certificate programme training under the PAN project to further put their knowledge into practice.

4.0 Potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) within the property that may affect the OUV

As the core Zone of LMCL which represents its property should be managed in a 'no touch' approach where only minimalist development will be allowed for site interpretation and conservation as per its management plan, the Buffer Zone which has complexity of land uses and ownership forms part of the living and active landscape which attracts developers having multiple interests. As already highlighted in previous reports, the State Party is very much committed to ensure the appropriate management of the property (both landscape and seascape) including its Integrity and Authenticity against any unwelcomed or inappropriate development within the Buffer Zone, in corridors or in its immediate vicinity. The existing legal and management frameworks such as the PPG2 and Management Plans of LMCL as well the LMHTF Act 2004 which is under revision are adequate and effective in the protection and management of LMCL. The nature and scope of development proposals received from promoters and landowners vary. Before submission of major project proposals within or in the vicinity of the landscape boundary, promoters are required to consult and make reference to the guidelines and management documents to guide their development proposals and put the OUV at the center of their development vision. Protection of the visual landscape and nightscape considering the ten critical viewpoints in the management plan and preservation of sense of place are also critical elements considered by the State Party in development assessment. As such, to reinforce capacity of members of the Buffer Zone Management committee, which constitutes professionals from different technical background for project assessment on LMCL, member thereof benefitted a training workshop from LMHTF which laid emphasis on the OUV of LMCL, the need to protect it, the various attributes, and the various critical viewpoints. Consequently, all development projects are measured against the site OUV, scrutinized and judged accordingly. Some development projects have not been approved or promoters have been requested to review their proposals to make sure that they meet the required standard. As a result, there are currently no major restorations, alterations or construction within the property, the buffer zone and corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the OUV of the property including its Authenticity and Integrity. The State Party retains its firm commitment towards UNESCO for the

protection and preservation of the LMCL and remains guided by paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines for the

Implementation of the World Heritage Convention which stipulates that “the World Heritage Committee invites the States Parties to the Convention to inform the Committee, through the Secretariat, of their intention to undertake or to authorize in an area protected under the Convention major restorations or new constructions which may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. Notice should be given as soon as possible (for instance, before drafting basic documents for specific projects) and before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse, so that the Committee may assist in seeking appropriate solutions to ensure that the Outstanding Universal Value of the property is fully preserved”.

5.0 Conclusion

It is important to highlight the relentless effort made by the State Party to maintain the OUV of LMCL despite the various issues and challenges addressed in this report.

Access to the mountain has been one of the major achievements of the State Party. LMHTF recognizes that there is still a long way to go in managing the access especially as regards the various issues associated with visitation such as biodiversity degradation, vandalism and theft. The Ministry of Arts and Culture is providing its strong support in order to combat this issue with the imminent launching of an Expression of Interest to engage a competent management company to cater for the overall access management under close supervision of LMHTF. In the meantime, LMHTF is continually increasing the capacity of its staff to manage the site in a higher standard. As a growing institution there is no doubt that as and when required, staffing and capacity building will be provided to meet the needs of the institution. The major upcoming projects such as the reconstruction of the former village of Trou Chenille and the maroonage museum project will certainly contribute to increased significance and appreciation of the values of LMCL to local and foreign visitors.

However, these projects are considered to be long term initiative and require action on a stage-wise basis to make sure that they are highly integrated into the landscape and respect the site OUV. Government is providing all its support by allocating the required resources to achieve this in terms of legal land ownership, funding and technical advice as highlighted in this report. The State Party is hence, highly confident that with the huge potential of LMCL, the site could become a model of sustainable development through responsible cultural tourism development for the country and a site of excellence where the local community still has a central role to play and are further economically benefitting from their traditional knowledge and practices for an improved quality of life with adequate infrastructure.