

A report on the State of Conservation in 2017
Cultural Landscape and Archaeological remains of the Bamiyan Valley
(2003, in Danger)
ID Number: Ref: C208rev

1. Response from Afghanistan to the World Heritage Committee's Decision 41 COM 7A.

a) Corrective measures taken by Afghanistan in reply to the World Heritage Committee's Decision(s)

Overall Management issues for the safeguarding of the Bamiyan World Heritage site:

Several meetings and discussions were organized throughout 2017 with local stakeholders of Kabul, Bamiyan, and international experts concerning proper management for the Bamiyan site. In this frame the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture with the help of UNESCO has organized International Co-ordination Meetings in Bamiyan throughout in 2017 and in Tokyo in October 2017. The meetings provided a unique opportunity for Afghan Government officials from relevant ministries and institutions (Bamiyan Governor/Mayor offices, Ministry of Information and Culture, and Ministry of Urban Development and Housing) to share their interventions and future plans for the protection of the world heritage site in Bamiyan. These coordination meetings are part of the structure of the management system in place to ensure the protection of the Bamiyan World Heritage site.

The 14th Bamiyan Technical Working Group was held at Tokyo University of the Arts in Tokyo, Japan from 1st to 2nd December 2017. The Acting Minister of Information and Culture of Afghanistan and the Governor of Bamiyan Province attended the meeting. Some 30 participants joined the meeting including several high-ranking officials from the Government of Afghanistan, along with international experts from Germany, Italy, Japan, US, Austria, and France, as well as UNESCO. The meeting was convened to present the latest activities implemented in Bamiyan in 2017, and provided another opportunity to enhance and increase national and international cooperation for the benefit of cultural heritage and sustainable development in Bamiyan. A set of recommendations was unanimously adopted by the participants, which set priorities for future activities from 2018 onwards, e.g., community empowerment in the Bamiyan Valley; issues related to city development within the Valley; archaeological investigations, preservation and

conservation of the historical monuments and mural Paintings in the Valley; consolidation of the Western Buddha niche; and the future treatment of the Eastern Buddha statue. A several new points were raised, highlighted as following:

- Possibility of establishing an archaeological park in the entire Bamiyan Valley, in order to enhance sustainable development and tourism resources, while ensuring the protection of cultural heritage;
- Modification of the boundary of the World Heritage Site, in order to ensure the protection of the archaeological remains and the cultural landscape of the Bamiyan Valley;
- Necessity to closely collaborate with the Afghan Ministry of Urban Development and the local government in Bamiyan in the development of a Strategic Master Plan for Bamiyan;
- Re-deploying appropriate number of security guards at the Bamiyan World Heritage site in order to improve tourism management and protect cultural properties; and
- Importance to keep on pursuing activities related to the conservation and monitoring of the wall paintings, and the stabilisation of the Western Buddha niche.

Cultural Master Plan:

The Bamiyan Cultural Master Plan was developed by the Ministry of Information and Culture and Ministry of Urban Development and Housing in consultation with UNESCO and implementing partners in 2007, and has continued to provide strong guidance for urban development planning and protection of the Bamiyan World Heritage site. Within the framework of the Japanese FIT project, the Government of Afghanistan and UNESCO jointly organized a series of community consultation workshops in Bamiyan in April and July 2017 concerning the Bamiyan Cultural Master Plan. Some 700 local community members attended these workshops to raise awareness of heritage management in Bamiyan and to assess levels of integration between the Cultural Master Plan and the Government's City Master Plan.

The Cultural Master Plan has already created a strong mandate for controlling urban growth in and around the cultural properties that comprise the serial sites. New shops of car-repair, parking stations for heavy vehicle, material storage spaces for building construction were relocated from the middle of the city to adjacent valleys that do not contain culturally important sites. Similarly, a significant new housing development has been planned further out of the city centre, away from the historical sites. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing and the University of Florence commenced to draft a Strategic Master Plan for Bamiyan since 2016. This plan is expected to finalize in summer 2018.

Because there is a strong need to synergise this Strategic Master Plan with the Culture Master Plan, the Government of Afghanistan organized a series of meetings in 2017 in Kabul, inviting main line of ministries involved, local authorities in Bamiyan, local university professors, UNESCO, and the University of Florence.

Due to the increased number of returnees from the neighboring countries to Afghanistan, expansion of house areas in the vicinity of heritage properties was reported to the Ministry of Information and Culture. Hence, further monitoring, coordination, joint planning, and interference by the central and local authorities will be required to prevent uncontrolled development at the historical sites. To this end, follow-up workshops are planned to be organized by the authorities and UNESCO in 2018, with a financial assistance of the Government of Japan, to provide further support to the proper management of the Bamiyan World Heritage site.

Site Guards:

The Government of Afghanistan continued to employ 8 on-site guards in each of the properties within the serial nominated sites by March 2017. This was aimed to control illegal or unauthorized access to the sites. In addition, the Ministry of Interior Affairs employed a team of police officers from the specialized unit (012) for the protection of cultural properties to monitor and safeguard the World Heritage properties within the Bamiyan Valley. However, due to the lack of national budget, the Afghan authorities have been facing a serious issue for not being able to deploy the on-site guards since April 2017, while the Government has kept exploring to identify necessary national budget.

Education and Public Awareness:

In September and October 2016, the Government of Afghanistan and UNESCO had organized a series of meetings in Kabul to discuss the future plans for the World Heritage Property. The participated authorities are the Ministry of Information and Culture, the Ministry of Urban Development, the Governor of Bamiyan and the Mayor. In addition, the aforementioned workshops in Bamiyan in 2017 provided local communities with an opportunity to jointly engage with Government representatives about heritage management and urban development.

Western Buddha Niche:

Funded by the Government of Japan, the authorities and UNESCO jointly commenced a preliminary consolidation work of the upper part of the Western Buddha Niche in August-September 2017. This work is based on a condition assessment report of the Western Buddha niche. This work was jointly implemented by the Ministry of Information and Culture, UNESCO, and German experts in 2016. The condition assessment report includes

the photographic survey result and analysis concerning the conservation status of the rear wall of the niche, and proposed a future conservation plan.

In 2017, the authorities in cooperation with UNESCO has reinforced the existing scaffolding structure in the Western Buddha niche, in order to set a logistic arrangement for enabling to reach the ceiling and back side of the niche, and to ensure that the condition of the some 55-meter scaffolding meets international safety standards.

In order to implement the preliminary consolidation work of the rear side of the Western Buddha niche, a three-week mission was organised by the Ministry of Information and Culture and UNESCO in August-September 2017. Local people in Bamiyan were also employed to help remove all debris and relocate these from the niche to the ground, in particular around the edges of the former shoulder of the Buddha statue. This was aimed to prevent future stone fall and allow further stabilization work.

The areas of left shoulder and major part of the right shoulder of the former Western Buddha statue were completely cleaned during the course of this operation. While cleaning the left shoulder, remains of painted plaster fragments were found, and MoIC staff ensured that the fragments were carefully preserved and stored in a storage for future study. Several students in Archaeology from Bamiyan University also took part in the work. The cleaning of the fragments was particularly laborious, as all the removed materials needed to be transported 40 meters down to the ground bucket by bucket.

The preliminary consolidation work of the rear side of the Western Buddha niche was implemented using anchors, horizontal steel cables, and wooden planks inside the steel net. The team managed to install ten rows of steel ropes in the top part of the former head-neck area. The industrial climbers from Germany, hanging on a rope from the top of the former head-area of the Western Buddha statue managed to drill holes for the anchor points by leaning on the existing protecting steel net. The 30-centimetre anchors were then glued into the rock by using a vinylester based grout.

After all ten ropes were mounted on the former Western Buddha face area, wooden planks and squared timbers in specific positions were set for emergency stabilization of the rear wall of the niche. The steel ropes were then tightened over the wooden planks and timbers to ensure their stability. These temporary measures will allow for the extension of the scaffolding up to the top of the niche, and for upcoming operations of grouting, nailing, and anchoring of the loose rock materials on the back side of the niche. Once the rehabilitation of the upper part of the niche will be completed, the steel ropes will be removed.

Follow-up actions for the stabilization of the Western Buddha niche

The rehabilitation of the Western Buddha niche is urgent. This work could be completed within the next three to four years) during the entire frost-free season in Bamiyan (spring and summer). This long timeframe would have the advantage to hire and keep local workers already trained in these particular activities and to perform the tasks in a more efficient way. However, due to the lack of the national budget, the Government of Afghanistan requires a significant amount of the budget to complete this important task, especially to the current donor and any other international community.

Based on the observations of the MoIC, UNESCO, and international experts, the next steps for the completion of the consolidation of the Western Buddha niche are listed as following:

- Recalculation of the static for the scaffolding's structural stabilisation;
- Extension of the scaffolding into the upper part of the niche;
- Estimation of a budget covering the entire required works for the rehabilitation of the entire niche;
- Elaboration of a bill of quantity for necessary equipment, activities, and manpower for the next years;
- Elaboration of a detailed time schedule for the planned rehabilitation works;
- Removal of the protective steel net in the upper area, to provide access to the rear wall;
- Acquisition and installation of an elevator to provide easier transport of equipment and material for drilling, grouting, and cementing in the upper part of the niche;
- Acquisition and installation of a chute for a more efficient removal of debris and loose rocks.

b) Progress towards the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger

Eastern Buddha Niche:

At its 40th Session the World Heritage Committee reiterated its request that any proposals to reconstruct the Eastern Buddha statue are appraised in relation to the OUV of the property and an overall approach to conservation and presentation of the property, and that any proposals are reviewed by the Advisory Bodies, for consideration by the World Heritage Committee, before technical and financial feasibility studies are undertaken..

Acknowledging this request, the Government of Afghanistan and UNESCO organized the Tokyo Symposium, from 27 to 29 September 2017, in order to discuss the future treatment of the Eastern Buddha niche in Bamiyan. The meeting provided an opportunity for technical experts to present proposals for revitalizing the Eastern Buddha statue and for the Afghan government to discuss how to retain the OUV of the Bamiyan World Heritage site while exploring any intervention of the treatment of the Eastern Buddha niche/statue. Proposals were invited for physical and non-physical reconstruction to ensure a balanced range of options. To follow the meeting, the Government of Afghanistan has formed a working group in the country to review the presented proposals. In order to ensure compliance with the recommendation of the 40th Session of the WHC, the selected proposal(s) by the Afghan government will be sent to the WHC and its ABs for their review, prior to implementation phase of a possible project.

Western Buddha niche:

As noted above, a detailed condition assessment and a preliminary stabilization work on the rear wall of the Western Buddha niche was conducted in 2017, which will form the basis of future stabilization work. A full-height scaffolding structure needs to be completed in 2018 to allow conservators to reach the rear wall and ceiling of the niche.

Shari Gholgholah:

Consolidation of some parts of Shahr-i-Gholghola at the south side such as walls and domical chambers was implemented in 2016 by the Department of Conservation of Historical Monuments of MoIC, and international experts from UNESCO, with the financial assistance of the Government of Italy.

This works have continued from late 2017, with the help of UNESCO and the Italian government. A preliminary activity in 2017 was set the ground for the next steps to be taken for; the improvement of the conservation status of Shahr-e Gholghola; preparation of the overall preservation of the plan; conservation of the historical and architectural remains; and the consolidation of terrain at the foothills of the site.

Condition Assessment of the mural paintings within the World Heritage Property

Following the recommendations of the 13th Bamiyan Technical Working Group held in Munich in December 2016, which specifies “*Underlining the importance of updating the current conditions of wall paintings since the last conservation intervention made in 2010*”, a joint mission between UNESCO international experts and national officials of MoIC was organised in July 2017 in Bamiyan. Formulated by the Ministry of Information and Culture, UNESCO, and Italian conservators, the mission conducted a detailed

condition assessment of remaining mural paintings located in caves throughout the Bamiyan Valley. This condition assessment, the first made since the last conservation intervention in 2010, was aimed to help achieve a desired state of conservation which shall enable the site to be removed from the List of World Heritage in danger in the future.

The team managed to visit around twenty caves located in the main Buddha cliff, in Kakrak Valley, and in Foladi Valley, in order to carry out a detail condition assessment and photographic documentation for the development of a future long-term conservation activity plan.

The Ministry of Information and Culture hopes for the continuation of the above mentioned works in the year 2018 onwards with support from the UNESCO, donor countries of Japan, Korea, Italy, and other international community. If these works can continue from 2018, i.e., to conserve many more historical properties and consolidation of the Western Buddha niche, the Government of Afghanistan hopes that the basic conditions to remove the site from the World Heritage in Danger shall be set.

Shah-I Zuhak

No work has been conducted in 2017.

Kakrak Valley

Mentioned above.

Qoul-I Akram Caves in the Foladi Valley No work has been conducted in 2017.

Kala-I Ghami

No work has been conducted in 2017.

Qalla-I Kaphari A

No work has been conducted in 2017.

Qalla-I Kaphari B

No work has been conducted in 2017.

Bamiyan Cultural Centre:

Initiated in June 2016 and funded by the Government of the Republic of Korea, the construction of the Bamiyan Cultural Centre is on-going in 2017. This Centre is aimed to establish a model to be a cultural creative hub in Bamiyan, in order for the local stakeholders to identify and learn Bamiyan's rich cultural backgrounds. In December 2016, the Government of the Republic of Korea committed a further \$1.9m for Phase II of the Bamiyan Cultural Centre project, which is a critical financial assistance to continue building operations until 2018.

Phase I of this project was agreed on the 26th of November 2013 between the Government of the Republic of Korea and UNESCO and Phase II was agreed on 22 December 2016. Phase II project provided additional funding necessary to continue with the construction of the award-winning design for this Centre, specifically to build the educational building where the workshops and trainings for tangible and intangible cultural heritage enhancement can take place to foster small and medium enterprises. In mid-2017, the Afghan Government also contributed to the Phase III of the project, in the view of creating a public park around the building.

With new funding from the Government of Korea under phase II, and also with the funding from the Afghan Government, the Bamiyan Cultural Centre will provide a cultural centre that is functional, welcoming and will serve as a modern display space for housing archaeological and ethnographic artefacts from the province. The Centre's temporary exhibition space will showcase contemporary artworks from across Afghanistan. The auditorium will provide an adaptable space that can be used for an extensive variety of purposes, such as music and film festivals, conferences and lectures, which will ultimately benefit many stakeholders from a wide demographic, ranging from young school children and visiting scholars, to national and international organizations.

c) Difficulties in implementing corrective measures.

The Government of Afghanistan unfortunately does not have enough financial resources to implement conservation activities on each of the historic sites and requires the continued assistance from UNESCO and the international community to address the aforementioned issues.

Many parts of the site within and outside the boundaries face increasing urban pressures from the re-settlement of people within the valley. In particular, private land claims are being made at the foot of the Buddha cliff, which has caused delays on site management planning.

Much of the vernacular architecture, traditional land use, canal and irrigation systems that make up the contemporary cultural landscape lie outside the present World Heritage boundaries of the site and is under increasing pressure for development and urban growth.

There is also the potential for mining in the nearby mountains of Bamiyan province which could catalyze further population growth and urbanism in the valley. Large scale development within the boundaries, adjacent or in nearby villages has the potential to negatively impact the OUV of the site. At the moment, this development is controlled through the implementation of the Cultural Master plan, but it still remains as one of the greatest challenges to the conservation of the site in the long term.

It requires modification of the boundary inscribed on the World Heritage List to include values of cultural landscapes. Hence re-examination of heritage value at Bamiyan will be needed. Modification of the country's legal management system and control mechanisms are also necessary to ensure the permanent protection of the Bamiyan WH site value. Given this situation, the Ministry of Information and Culture, in cooperation with UNESCO, is currently revising the 2004 National Law for the Protection of the Cultural Heritage in Afghanistan.

The Afghan authorities also have been facing a serious issue for non-deployment of the on-site guards due to the lack of national budget.

Best Regards,

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