

Ministry of Heritage & Culture

State of Conservation Report

Bahla Fort World Heritage Site Sultanate of Oman (C433)



December 31st 2017

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State Party would like to express its thanks and appreciation for the great efforts made by the World Heritage Center and the advisory bodies to follow the state of conservation of this site. It also expresses the highest appreciation for the Mission and deeply thanks all its Members for the valuable contribution they offered. However, the State Party would like to provide with comments and remarks on some of the recommendations included in the World Heritage Committee Decision 40 COM 7B.26 on its 40th Session, held in Istanbul from to July 10th to 20th 2016. On the other hand, the State Party is already working to implement other positive outcomes of the Mission.

In order to react more effectively to the specific tasks required by the implementation of the Management Plan for Bahla and other sites in the country, in 2016 the State Party has established a World Heritage Sites Department (WHSD) within the Ministry of Heritage & Culture (Royal Decree No 40/2016).

The State Party is coordinating all subjects involved in the Management Plan at both government and local level to finalize the legal framework necessary for a correct implementation of the Management Plan with the technical supervision of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. These actions include (i) the creation of a wider buffer zone, (ii) the regulation for the use of the agricultural land in the oasis (Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries), (iii) the optimization of the use of the *Falaj* System (with the Ministry of Regional Municipalities & Water Resources), and (iv) the general infrastructural development (with the Ministry of Transport & Communications and the Ministry of Housing).

The Ministry of Heritage and Culture is also setting a local Site Management Office at Bahla, whose staff has been already assigned and is presently working at the Regional Office in Nizwa. Moreover, all plans and actions necessary for the correct implementation of the Management Plan involved consultation with members of the local community and all the stakeholders.

The State Party also clarifies the principles and methodology adopted to undertake specific intervention works in the different zones of the Site according to the original morphology and building techniques of the structure and the general plan of streets and alleys. This will regard in particular the works carried out in (i) the *Souq*, which are based on extensive archaeological explorations, (ii) the Shaikh Bin Baraka Mausoleum and the Alkhair Mosque, and (iii) the Wall (Bahla *Sur*). All these activities will be based on detailed documentation campaigns in order ensure the authenticity and integrity of each monument and will count on the supply of the necessary mud-bricks by *ad hoc* adobe workshops.