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Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Ministry of Culture & Tourism
Authority for Research & Conservation of
Cultural Heritage



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Ref.No 01/14.1/084
ቀን
Date 26 JAN 2017

Dr. Mechtild Rössler
Director World Heritage Center
7, place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris 07 SP
France

Subject: - RESPONSE TO THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE DECISION

Dear Dr. Mechtild,

In accordance with Decision (40 COM 7B.10), I am pleased to submit a progress report to the World Heritage Center on the issues raised by the World Heritage Committee on the State of Conservation of the Aksum world heritage property, in the indicative format, for examination of the Committee at its 42nd session in 2018. The report is therefore enclosed to this letter.

Ethiopia wishes to reassure to the World Heritage Committee that the State Party will continue to implement the World Heritage Convention (1972) to ensure the sustained preservation of the world heritage properties elsewhere.

Should you require any further information, I always remain at your disposal.

Cc:

- Office of the Minister
- Office of the State Minister (Culture)
Ministry of Culture and Tourism
- Permanent Delegation of Ethiopia
Paris



Sincerely yours,


Yonas Desta
Director General

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Please Quote Our Ref. No. When Replying



Government of Ethiopia

**STATE PARTY REPORT ON THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF AKSUM
(Ethiopia) (C 15)**

**IN RESPONSE TO THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE DECISION
40 COM 7B.10**

FOR SUBMISSION BY 1 FEBRUARY 2017



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Decision: 40 COM 7B.10

Aksum (Ethiopia) (C 15)

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/16/40.COM/7B,
2. Recalling Decision **39 COM 7B.39**, adopted at its 39th session (Bonn, 2015),
3. Congratulates the State Party on the progress made in protecting, conserving and managing the property in accordance with the recommendations of the 2013 Reactive Monitoring mission;
4. Acknowledges the achievements of the Ethiopian Sustainable Tourism Development Project (ESTDP), broadly in line with the World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Programme, but notes that the designs of the ESTDP interventions should not be applied to other areas of the property;
5. Requests the State Party to submit details of the façade modification for the Church Museum to the World Heritage Centre for review; to expedite the completion of the Church Museum project, including the conservation of the collections, as soon as possible, and to investigate the archaeological features that were reported as being discovered during the Church Museum building works, and advise the World Heritage Centre accordingly;
6. Also requests the State Party to finalize and submit the draft Management Plan for Aksum to the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies for review in conjunction with the Thematic Master Plan;
7. Commends the State Party for gazetting the boundaries of the property and its buffer zone, and further requests the State Party to submit the detailed maps of the physical boundaries of the property and its buffer zone to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2016**, for review by the Advisory Bodies;
8. Requests furthermore the State Party to keep the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies updated on the consolidation project for the reinforcement of the foundation of Stela III and the investigation of the causes of the rising water level in the Tomb of the Brick Arches, to continue to seek expert specialist advice, to avoid any proposal that requires excavation in or around the Tomb of the Brick Arches, and to pursue more cautious options;
9. Requests moreover the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre details of all current and potential developments within the property and the buffer zone, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;
10. Encourages the State Party to instigate training for relevant personnel on the requirements of the Convention, the Operational Guidelines and the Management Plan for Aksum, once finalized;
11. Also encourages the State Party to continue to implement the recommendations of the 2013 Reactive Monitoring mission and to implement the additional recommendations of the 2015 Reactive Monitoring mission;
12. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2017**, 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 42nd session in 2018.



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This progress report on the state of conservation of the Aksum World Heritage Site responds to the World Heritage Committee Decision (**40 COM 7B.10**) and provides the first comprehensive management plan document of the property.

As requested by the World Heritage Committee (**Decision: 39 COM 7B.39**) the ICOMOS Reactive a Reactive Monitoring Mission to the property was held from 01 - 06 February 2016.

The final and comprehensive report of the mission was submitted to the State party with important recommendations on the overall state of conservation of the property, which will assist the government of Ethiopia to maintain and enhance the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

This report includes the new management plan (appendix-1) of the Aksum world heritage property, which was indorsed in June 2016 and brings together the recommendations of the ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission in 2016 and the World Heritage Committee decision as well as previous recommendations by the High level UNESCO/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission in 2013.

This progress report brings together the response of the State Party for considerations by the World Heritage Committee, Conservation Issues and other major restorations, alteration and /or construction (s) within the buffer zone of the protected area that may be envisaged.

The report is provided for examination by the Committee at its 42th session in 2018 and the government of Ethiopia is fully committed to protecting the Outstanding Universal Value of the property and ensuring that its integrity is maintained for humanity.



2. Responses of the State Party

This progress report responds to the requests of the World Heritage Committee in Decision: **40 COM 7B.10** paragraph by paragraph for examination by the Committee at its 42th session in 2018.

a. Paragraph 5: Requests on the detailed design for the façade modification for the Church Museum and the plan for the conservation of the collections, and investigation results of the archaeological features discovered during the Church Museum building works;

In accordance with the recommendations of the joint UNESCO/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission in 2013 and the ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Missions to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was undertaken in 2016 undertaken in the Aksum world heritage property, a special arrangement is set within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, to improve the designs for the façade treatment of the church museum building.

In view of that, the construction of the new museum has been temporarily ceased pending to finalize the design of the façade treatment of the building so that the new structure could blend into the integrity of the entire landscape of the World Heritage property.

b. Paragraph 6: Requirements to finalize and submit the draft Management Plan of the Aksum world heritage site to the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies for review;

The final and comprehensive report of the Reactive Monitoring Mission of ICOMOS recommends that the Government of Ethiopia to submit the management plan of the site where the plan should be tested against the provision of the Regulation 346/2015. The report also presents numerous recommendations concerning issues of management, planning, conservation, training and other site specific recommendations.

To address the recommendations by ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission, a validation workshop was organized from 27 – 29 June 2016, in the ancient town of Aksum to endorse the draft management plan by local bodies since full public consultation gives the plan considerable weight as a material consideration in the planning process. Then the draft ten years plan (2017-2026) was endorsed by all the key and primary stakeholders as well as the World Heritage Site management committee. Though labelled as a 'draft', the management plan is the document formally adopted by relevant bodies. The adopted plan was then passed to the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage, which in turn is forwarding to the World Heritage Center on 1 February 2017 for review by the advisory bodies of UNESCO.



c. Paragraph 7- Further requirements on the detailed maps of the physical boundaries of the property and its buffer zone to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;

The final and comprehensive report of the ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring undertaken from 01 - 06 February 2016 in the Aksum world heritage property recommends that the Government of Ethiopia submit the maps of the property clearly indicating the core and buffer zones of the property with explanatory information to the World Heritage Committee. The recommendation further requests that the maps should to be accompanied by explanatory information concerning each zone.

Accordingly, the State Party of Ethiopia took note of the comprehensive ICOMOS report on the Aksum world heritage property and the request for detailed maps of the site, Furthermore, the State party paid attention to address the concerns and recommendations of ICOMOS mission especially concerning the building control within the buffer zone.

d. Paragraph 8 - Updates of the consolidation project for the reinforcement of the foundation of Stela III and the investigation of the causes of the rising water level in the Tomb of the Brick Arches;

The State Party would like to recall that the government of Ethiopia has decided to fully self-finance the Consolidation Project of Stele III and the investigation of the causes for the rising water table inside the Tomb of the Brick Arches. In accordance with this arrangement, the Ethiopian Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation has also approved the procedure that allows the highest financial limit to undertake the above mention tasks.

In response to the World Heritage Committee's earlier decision two Engineers, working for Studio Croci & Associati, have been identified to be involved in the Consolidation Project of Stele III, either as a supervisor and/or a coordinator to implement the previous engineering document by Studio Croci & Associati. However it is understood that the previous document was very preliminary and lacks precise costs of the engineering work.

Therefore, an agreement is reached that an initial supervisory mission is required to check the current status of Stele III and discuss on the roadmap of the course of work. Based on the results of the supervisory mission, the State Party will establish a contract agreement with an engineering firm, which could develop the design of the stabilization measures and draft the international tender documents. After this an international tender will be



launched by the Government of Ethiopia to undertake the stabilization of Stele III and investigate the causes of the rising water table in the Tomb of the Brick Arches.

e. Paragraph 9- Further requirements on the details of all current and potential developments within the property and the buffer zone, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;

In response to the joint UNESCO/ICOMOS Reactive monitoring mission recommendations in 2013 and the ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission in 2016, the State Party adopted the Structure Plan for the Aksum town, which was under process during the ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission, in June 2016 in the presence of all concerned bodies. This structural plan was designed to address challenges facing the property due to developmental pressures and to check inappropriate development in the buffer zone of the property.

f. Paragraph 10- Encourages the State Party to instigate training for relevant personnel on the requirements of the Convention, the Operational Guidelines and the Management Plan for Aksum, once finalized;

In response to the ICOMOS Reactive monitoring mission recommendations, the State Party would like to organize training sessions on the implementation of the 1972 Convention and the *Operational Guidelines* for all members of the new Advisory Committee established under Regulation 346/2015 and all experts working under ARCCH and Agency for Culture and Tourism (Axum Cluster), Tigray Region. The training will also help to implement the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape that extends to other world heritage sites in Ethiopia where heritage fabrics form part of everyday life of the local community. These sites include the Harar Jugol the the Fortified Historic Town, the Lalibela and Fasil Ghebbi world heritage sites. Therefore the State Party wishes to request possible international assistance to accomplish the above mention training sessions.

8. Other current conservation issues identified by the State(s) Party(ies).

The ancient city of Aksum is among fast growing cities in Ethiopia, a country that currently counts among the world's fastest growing economies. To counterpart challenges from development pressure in the city, the administration of Aksum developed integrated structural plan where the world heritage property has received due attention.




9. Updates on any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone.

Following the adoption of the new structural plan, new constructions are not allowable in the ancient city of Aksum.

10. Public access to the state of conservation report.

The State Party is willing to make this Statement of Conservation Report open of public access.

11. SIGNATURE ON BEHALF OF STATE PARTY

Full name Yonas Desta Tsegaye **Yonas Desta
Director General**
Title Director General 
Date _____

12. Appendixes

Appendix: 1 Management plan for the Aksum World Heritage Property

