

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

Our Ref. GB/AS/278rev/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 9 January 2019

Professor Mahmood Al-MullaKhalaf
Permanent Delegation of Iraq to UNESCO
Maison de l'UNESCO
1, rue Miollis
75732 Paris CEDEX 15

World Heritage List 2019

Babylon (Iraq) – Interim report and additional information request

Dear Ambassador,

As prescribed by the revised Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention and its Annex 6, the Advisory Bodies have been requested to submit a short interim report for each nomination by 31 January 2019. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation process.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to the “Babylon” was carried out by Assaad Seif (Lebanon) in September – October 2018. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organization and implementation of the mission.

On 9 October 2018, a letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding the proposed justification of Outstanding Universal Value, maps and photographs. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 7 November 2018 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

At the end of November 2018, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2019. The additional information, together with mission and desk review reports were carefully examined by the Panel members. This process will conclude in March 2019.

We thank you for the availability of your Delegation to the meeting held on Monday 26 November 2018 with some representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. During the final part of the ICOMOS Panel meeting that followed, the ICOMOS Panel has identified areas where it considers that further information is needed.

While the ICOMOS Panel considered that the “Babylon” might have the potential to meet the requirements for Outstanding Universal Value, this has not yet been demonstrated.

Therefore, we would be pleased if the State Party could consider the following points:

Delimitation of boundaries to encompass attributes

The ICOMOS Panel considered the property has a high potential of demonstrating Outstanding Universal Value for the archaeological remains of the neo-Babylonian capital and subsequent layers of ancient civilizations. However, the ICOMOS Panel did not consider that the more recent layers, in particular the alterations to the property in the 20th century could be considered a symbolic continuation and hence attribute of the Outstanding Universal Value. It therefore expressed the desire to modify the boundaries of the property to exclude these modern alterations.

ICOMOS understands that at times such alterations are superimposed layers on top of the archaeological remains. In view of this discussion, the ICOMOS Panel requests the State Party to develop a three-dimensional boundary delimitation, which illustrates the archaeological layers included and the alterations excluded from the World Heritage property. The excluded alterations would then become part of the buffer zone. This could be comparable to designations made earlier in the World Heritage context for underground mines (cf. the Wieliczka and Bochnia Royal Salt Mines, Poland) or caves (cf. Decorated Cave of Pont d'Arc known as Grotte Chauvet-Pont d'Arc, Ardèche, France). The aim would be to define a boundary which includes all remaining archaeological evidence above ground and underground while illustrating that changes in landscaping and added 20th century architecture will not be subject to a World Heritage protection scheme.

Protection of the property

The ICOMOS Panel observed, that although the property is legally protected at highest national level, there appear to be challenges in the implementation of this legal protection. The Panel observed that in the past 9 years more than 30 houses were constructed within the property boundaries. While it was understood based on the explanations provided by the State Party that the Antiquities Department supported by the Antiquities Police on site had the power to intervene against any illegal action, the Panel would like to better understand why the construction of these houses could not be prevented and how similar construction attempts will be avoided in the future.

Conservation challenges

The conservation challenges in Babylon seem considerable, both on the not yet restored excavated remains and for the reconstructed areas. The Panel did study the Management Plan which was submitted as part of the additional information provided and has noted the aims outlined for the future conservation. However, it would like the State Party to further elaborate on the available resources, both human and financial, dedicated to the conservation of the property and the concrete conservation activities which are foreseen in the short and medium term?

In the meeting with the State Party it was mentioned that the artificial canals in the property had in the meantime been drained and that hence most of the conservation challenges which resulted from high ground water levels has subsided. Could the State Party provide further evidence of the draining activity and the resulting improved situation regarding ground water levels?

Future archaeological research

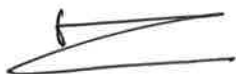
The ICOMOS Panel noted with satisfaction the indication provided in our meeting that surveys would be given preference over future excavation campaigns. The ICOMOS Panel would like to receive further information on the basis of which criteria any future requests, in particular by foreign agencies, for excavation or surveys at Babylon will be evaluated and eventually approved.

We look forward to your responses to these points, which will be of great help in our evaluation process.

We would be grateful if you could provide ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre with the above information by **28 February 2019 at the latest**, the deadline set out in paragraph 148 of the Operational Guidelines for supplementary information on nominations to be received. Please note that any information submitted after this date will not be considered by ICOMOS in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee. It should be noted, however, that while ICOMOS will carefully consider any supplementary information submitted, it cannot properly evaluate a completely revised nomination or large amounts of new information submitted at the last minute. So we request to keep your response concise and respond only to the above requests.

We thank you for your support of the World Heritage Convention and the evaluation process.

Yours faithfully,



Marie-Laure Lavenir
Director General
ICOMOS International Secretariat

Copy to Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities
 State Board of Antiquities and Heritage
 National Museum of Iraq
 Babil Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage
 UNESCO World Heritage Centre