

The Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH)
Report for the 38th Session of the World Heritage Committee
Qatar (Doha), 15-25/06/2014

Date of the Report: 12/02/2014

1. Background and mandate of the Centre

In July 2009, the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) signed the agreement on the establishment, in Bahrain, of an Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH) as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO.

The ARC-WH is an autonomous and independent legal entity at the service of Arab Member States. It acts as a relay for the action of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and its partners in the Arab region by federating energies around the conservation, promotion and presentation of cultural and natural heritage. The purpose is to balance and increase the representation of Arab States' properties on the World Heritage List, promote better protection and management of these properties, mobilize regional and international financial support, and raise awareness about World Heritage in the region.

The ARC-WH's mandate comes as a response to regional needs and priorities in relation to main focus areas defined by UNESCO, particularly in its Draft Medium Term Strategy for 2014-2021 (37 C/4). The ARC-WH addresses key issues including ongoing political transformations and conflicts that affect several Arab States, inadequacy of institutional and legislative tools needed for effective World Heritage Program implementation, limited awareness and support from the region's decision makers, and limited human and technical capacities within national agencies responsible for the implementation of the Convention.

The ARC-WH's mission is to enhance the implementation of the 1972 World Heritage Convention in Arab States by strengthening the application of the decisions and Recommendations of the World Heritage Committee for the benefit of existing and potential World Heritage Sites in the Arab region.

The ARC-WH shall achieve its mission by being:

- 1) a credible source of technical assistance to improve Arab States' capacity to implement the World Heritage Convention through knowledge-sharing and communication;
- 2) a platform to logistically and financially support national and regional activities with a view to facilitating World Heritage fund raising and resource mobilization at all levels;
- 3) a regional hub to disseminate information on the World Heritage Convention and its application through the development and management of a website in Arabic, English and French as well as the preparation, translation, and publication of relevant knowledge tools and literature.

2. Institutional and operational structure of the Centre (Governing Board, Staffing, Operational funding and premises)

The ARC-WH, located in Manama, is funded by the Government of Bahrain under the authority of the Ministry of Culture and the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Governing Board of the ARC-WH consists of:

H.E. Sheikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa: Minister of Culture of the Kingdom of Bahrain and Chairperson of the Governing Board

Sheikha Rana bint Essa Al Khalifa: Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain

Ms. Nada Al Hassan: Representative of UNESCO

Mr. Tim Badman: Representative of IUCN

Mr. Joseph King: Representative of ICCROM

Ms. Regina Durighello: Representative of ICOMOS

Dr. Sultan Muhsen: Representative of Qatar

Ms. Rasheeda Zadem: Representative of Algeria

Mr. Jad Tabet: Representative of Lebanon

Dr. Mounir Bouchenaki: Director of the ARC-WH (without the right to vote)

Sheikh Khalifa Ahmed Al Khalifa: Deputy Director of the ARC-WH (without the right to vote)

The Secretariat of the ARC-WH consists of:

Dr. Mounir Bouchenaki: Director

Sheikh Khalifa Ahmed Al Khalifa: Deputy Director

Dr. Kamal Bitar: Programme Specialist for Cultural Heritage

Dr. Roha Khalaf: Assistant Programme Specialist for Cultural Heritage

Mr. Ali El Zein: Online Editor and Communications Specialist

Ms. Maram Maher: Public Relations Assistant

Ms. Elsy Nassif: Executive Secretary

Mr. Ahmed Kassab: HR, Admin, Finance

Sheikha Ebrahim Humood Al Khalifa: Communications & Publications

Ms. Haifaa Abdulhalim: Programme Specialist for Natural Heritage (joining the ARC-WH in March 2014)

3. Programs and activities implemented since June 2013 and planned for the current year

N.	Title of the activity	Reference to WHCBS
1	Workshop on the preparation of nomination files for natural heritage properties, 1-5 September 2013, ARC-WH Headquarters, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain ¹	Credibility: Actions 2.3 and 2.6
2	Workshop on the sound management of natural heritage, 7-11 September 2013, ARC-WH Headquarters, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain ²	Conservation: Actions 3.3 and 4.3
3	The mission to the Historic Town of Zabid, September 29-October 5, 2013, Zabid, Yemen ³	Conservation: Actions 4.9 and 6.1 Community: Action 8.3
4	Arab States' Focal Points Annual Regional meeting, 24-26 November 2013, Diplomat Radisson Blu Hotel, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain ⁴	Credibility: Action 1.4 Conservation: Action 5.3

¹ The ARC-WH welcomed between the 1st and 5th of September a workshop organized by IUCN on the preparation of nomination files for natural properties, for their inscription on the World Heritage List. Experts and representatives of relevant institutions in Arab countries participated (Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen).

² The ARC-WH welcomed between the 7th and 11th of September a workshop organized by IUCN on the sound management of natural World Heritage properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. Experts and representatives of relevant institutions in Arab countries participated (Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen).

³ As per the agreement between the Bahraini and Yemeni Ministries of Culture, the ARC-WH sent the cultural heritage expert, Dr. Kamal Bitar, on a mission to Zabid, in Yemen, from the 29th of September to the 5th of October, 2013. This mission aims at implementing the "memorandum" signed between Bahrain and Yemen. Dr. Bitar inspected the state of conservation of Zabid and identified priorities to establish a project for its restoration and conservation. The work related to the preparation of implementation plans and documents of the selected project is ongoing in close cooperation with the representatives of GOPHSY (General Organism for the Preservation of the Historical Sites of Yemen). The whole rehabilitation process, starting with the identification of the projects, through contacting the potential consultants for the preparation of the implementation plans, to carrying out a socio-economic survey, is and will continue to be coordinated with GOPHSY's personnel to improve their capacity to manage an urban rehabilitation project.

⁴ This three-day meeting brought together cultural and natural heritage focal points from many Arab States as well as representatives of ALECSO, ATHAR ICCROM, IUCN, ICOMOS, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, the UNESCO field offices and the Secretariat of the ARC-WH to discuss the priorities of the region, such as the implementation of the World Heritage Convention at national level, the re-examination of tentative lists, the nomination of properties for inscription on the World Heritage List, the management of World Heritage Sites and the improvement of the access to information. The outcome of these discussions have helped the ARC-WH define its strategic approach and Action Plan for 2014. After this three-day meeting, the members of the Advisory Committee of the ARC-WH met and gave recommendations regarding the strategy and activities of the ARC-WH, which were adopted by the Governing Board on February 4th 2014.

5	Regional meeting on the application of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape in the Arab region, 8-12 December 2013, Rabat, Morocco ⁵	Conservation: Actions 3.6, 4.1 and 4.8
6	Last capacity-building workshop for the preparation of the World Heritage nomination file of the Marshlands of Southern Iraq, December 10-17, ARC-WH Headquarters, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain ⁶	Credibility: Action 2.6
7	Inventory, tentative list and harmonization for a balanced representation of cultural and natural sites, foreseen in April 2014 ⁷	Credibility: Action 2.4
8	Management of World Heritage properties in 2014 ⁸	Conservation: Actions 3.4, 4.3 and 5.3
9	Synergy and Integrated Strategy (positioning of the ARC-WH) in 2014 ⁹	Conservation: Actions 3.4, 4.8, 5.3 Communication: Action 6.1

⁵ Following a proposal from UNESCO to provide technical assistance to Arab States, the ARC-WH and the World Heritage Centre organized a three-day regional meeting on Historic Urban Landscapes during which experts and representatives of the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory bodies, the Arab States and the ARC-WH gathered to assess the implementation of the Recommendation on the HUL in the Arab region. The meeting may result in pilot projects in one of the region's cities (inscribed on the World Heritage List or the Tentative List). One or two cities may then volunteer to become pilot projects in 2014.

⁶ At the request of the UNESCO office for Iraq, the ARC-WH received, in its premises in Manama from the 10th until the 17th of December, Iraqi experts from the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities as well as representatives of the UNESCO office for Iraq, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), IUCN and the World Monuments Fund to complete the World Heritage nomination file of the Marshlands of Southern Iraq. The participants worked in “cultural” and “natural” groups to revise the various sections of the nomination file: the description of the property (history and development), the justification for inscription (statement of criteria and OUV, comparative analysis, statement of integrity and authenticity), the state of conservation and factors affecting the property as well as monitoring.

⁷ Workshop on Wadi Al-Salam Cemetery in Najaf, inscribed on the Tentative List of Iraq, organized by UNESCO and the ARC-WH, to be held in the ARC-WH. The workshop also aims at developing the capacity of local participants.

⁸ Workshop on effective law enforcement in natural World Heritage Sites, organized by IUCN and hosted by the ARC-WH in January 2014; Workshops to be organized in the field of natural heritage at the ARC-WH (*Tabea* Programme with IUCN, in Qatar, Oman, Iraq ...); Organization of workshops on natural and cultural heritage in cooperation with the Advisory Bodies (IUCN, ICCROM and ICOMOS).

⁹ Participation of the ARC-WH in the activities of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre with the Arab States Unit throughout the year; Participation of the ARC-WH in joint activities with the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF), the Nordic World Heritage Foundation (NWHF), the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITRAP) and ICCROM-ATHAR in Sharjah; Participation of experts from the Arab region and the ARC-WH in the meeting organized in Shanghai.

10	Documentation and dissemination of information in 2014 ¹⁰	Conservation Actions 4.1, 4.8 and 5.3
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4. Website of the Centre (if available):

The website of the ARC-WH is trilingual: Arabic, English and French.

<http://arcwh.org/>

5. Designated Focal Point:

Sheikh Khalifa Ahmed Al Khalifa
Deputy Director of the ARC-WH

+ (973) 17 00 32 24 (Manama, Bahrain)

+ (631) 480 5172 (New York, USA)

k.alkhalifa@arcwh.org

¹⁰ Translation of books and technical publications on World Heritage from English or French to Arabic, and funding the cost of printing this material in collaboration with the Arabian Gulf Centre for Information and Documentation in Kuwait and ICCROM-ATHAR in Sharjah to widen the scope of knowledge with regard to cultural and natural World Heritage; Participation of the ARC-WH's professional staff in conferences and technical seminars; Attendance of the ARC-WH's experts at the World Heritage Committee meeting for the organization of side events, including an exhibition on World Heritage Sites in Danger in the Arab region.