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 Authority for research & Conservation of
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 Ref. No. 0118/44/004
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Subject: - RESPONSE TO THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE DECISION

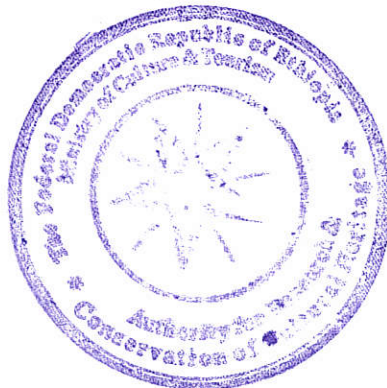
Dear Kishore,

In accordance with the World Heritage Committee decision (**WHC37COM 7B.38**), I am pleased to submit a progress report regarding the issues raised at its 37th session in 2013. The report, in the indicative format, is therefore enclosed to this letter for examination at the Committee's 39th session in 2015.

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

Should you have any further query, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Faithfully yours,



Yonas Desta
YONAS DESTA
GENERAL DIRECTOR



GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA

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

IN RESPONSE TO THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE DECISION

WHC37COM 7B.38

FOR SUBMISSION BY 1 FEBRUARY 2015

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The World Heritage Committee's Thirty-seventh session

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

16 - 27 June 2013

Aksum (Ethiopia) (C 15)

Decision: 37 COM 7B.38

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-13/37.COM/7B,
2. Recalling Decision **36 COM 7B.41**, adopted at its 36th session (Saint-Petersburg, 2012),
3. Notes requests the results of the mission that the Church Museum when completed will not have an adverse visual impact on specific views within the property if a screen of tall trees is maintained and the building façade is slightly modified as recommended by the mission; and the State Party to submit the final plans to the World Heritage Centre as soon as possible;
4. Urges the State Party to implement the Management Plan with, if possible, the involvement of the Department of Archaeology, Aksum University, and to review the Aksum Master Plan in terms of heritage management;
5. Also urges the State Party to finalise the clarification of the boundaries of the property and its buffer zone as a matter of urgency and to submit a minor boundary modification to the World Heritage

Centre by **1 February 2015** for examination by the World Heritage Committee;

6. Also notes that the State Party considers that the cause of the rising water table in the Tomb of the Brick Arches has a direct relation with the destabilization of Stele III, which in turn is believed to be related to the re-installation of Stele II and that the State Party has not identified funding to deal with either an investigation of the rising water table or with strengthening the foundations of Stele III, as recommended by a technical report;

7. Appeals to the international community, to consider supporting work to address the implications of the consolidation project of Stele III;

8. Also requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2015**, 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 39th session in 2015.

Executive Summery

This progress report on the State of Consecration of the Aksum World Heritage Site;

- Responds to the World Heritage Committee Decision: 37 COM 7B.38, made in the Thirty seventh session in **Phnom Penh, Cambodia 16 - 27 June (2013)** by providing a detailed report on the issues raised in the Decision.
- Provides the proposed final draft boundary of the Core as well as the Buffer Zone of the property.

This document includes the progress report requested by the World Heritage Committee in Decision: **37 COM 7B.38** regarding the negative impacts resulted from the construction of the Orthodox Church Museum in Aksum and the final plan of the building façade upon its finishing, the consolidation of the foundation of Stele III and identifying the causes of the rise in the water table inside the Tomb of the Brick Arches, the completion of the map for the boundary of the property, and the implementation of the management plan in collaboration with the Aksum University.

Underneath is provided a comprehensive report that replies all the concerns raised by the World Heritage Committee. This report is made available for examination by the Committee at its 39th session in 2015.

1. Responses of the State Party

1.1 Concerns regarding the visual impact of the church museum building on the Aksum world heritage property and the submission of the final plans of the building to the World Heritage Centre;

The State Party refers to the State of Conservation report submitted to the World Heritage Committee in response to decision **(36 COM 7B.41)** on the Aksum World Heritage Site. In this report it was mentioned that the new Church Museum was basically designed to enhance the values of the Aksum World Heritage Site and its associated landscape.

Since the official visit of the high level UNESCO-ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission in January (20-27) 2013, the construction of the church museum is being carried out and is making significant progress. However the construction work is not finished yet. As it has already been mentioned in the project document, the building of the church museum was intentionally designed to illustrate important Aksumite relics that exist for centuries in Aksum and its environs. Therefore the façades of the church museum are planned to be synchronized with the visual integrity of the world heritage site and its surroundings.

As for the indigenous trees that exist within the compound of the church for centuries, particularly that facing the Main Stele Field, the plan is to maintain all of them permanently mainly for their historical significance to the church of St. Mary of Zion.

The State Party would also like to recall the submission of the detailed plan of the Church Museum, in soft copy, on 23 March 2012 to the World

Heritage Center for review. However to give additional information about the façade of the museum building, a detailed plan has also been attached to this report (see also appendix-1).

1.2 Call for the implementation of the management plan and the review of the Aksum Master plan in terms of heritage management;

The management plan for the Aksum World Heritage Site has been developed in close collaboration with the department of Archaeology in the University of Aksum. As a result detailed survey works have been conducted to identify major conservation issues of the site. This includes the consolidation work for the foundation of Stele III and the rise in the water level of the Tomb of the Brick Arches, which are set as the first priority of action in the management plan document.

From its inception, the Aksum Master Plan has been developed through a series of stakeholders' consultations, where heritage management was the fundamental topic of discussion. Accordingly, the Thematic Master Plan was designed to address specific management issues of the world heritage property. Hence the agreed upon Thematic Master Plan document has been endorsed by the regional government to ensure that any development endeavor in the town Aksum would be in line with heritage management concerns.

1.3 A request to finalize the clarification of the boundaries of the property and its Buffer zone and submit to the World Heritage Centre;

In response to the Committee's request, the State Party invited the National Mapping Agency to finalize the boundary delineation of the Aksum World

Heritage property, by providing all the required data obtained from the previous survey works and which has been approved through several stakeholders' consultation.

As a result, the draft map of the boundary has been developed and included in the draft law the property, which should be endorsed by the Council of Ministers in a while. The draft boundary involves the proposed Core with the Buffer Zone is also attached to this report (See also Appendix-2).

1.4 A request to identify the causes of the rising water table in the Tomb of the Brick Arches and for the destabilization of Stele III with funding sources to deal with the issues;

In response to the World Heritage Committee decision (at its 37th session Phnom Penh, 2013), the State Party had communicated the World Heritage Centre, by providing the project document prepared by the Studio Croci & Associati, for the Consolidation of Stele III Foundation of Aksum in March 2012.

In return the Party has received a response (REF: CLT/WHC/74/ETH/12/15/LE) highlighting the full agreement of UNESCO on the technical specifications of the document. Simultaneously, the government of Ethiopia has been dedicated to finance the Project for the Reinforcement of the Foundation of Stele III together with the investigation of the causes for the rising water level in the Tomb of the Brick Arches.

In the meantime the State Party has also assigned a team of experts to identify the root causes of the rising water table in the Tomb of the Brick

Arches, where the team has primary been scheduled to remove the sediments built up inside the Tomb and then to identify the point of water access to the structure.

1.5 A call to appeal to the international community to consider supping work to address the implication of the consolidation project of Stele III;

The State Party has communicated the World Heritage Center, seeking Technical and Professional support to implement the engineering project document for the Consolidation of the Foundation of Stele III.

In response, UNESCO has promised to identify an international expert to supervise the work or act as a coordinator, where the State Party was required to cover all the costs related to this expert. Alternatively, the State Party was required to send the funds to UNESCO, if the project is self-benefiting Funds-in-Trust, which demands extra finance to cover the costs of the coordinators that will be assigned by UNESCO to manage the activities.

As a result, the World Heritage Center has recommended two Engineers, working for Studio Croci & Associati who could possibly supervise and coordinate the Project in September 2014. Currently the State Party is working to start operational activities to implement the engineering document of the project.

2. Other current conservation issues identified by the State Party

Derived from the previous resettlement plan, numerous households had been relocated from the Core area of the property to a newly designated

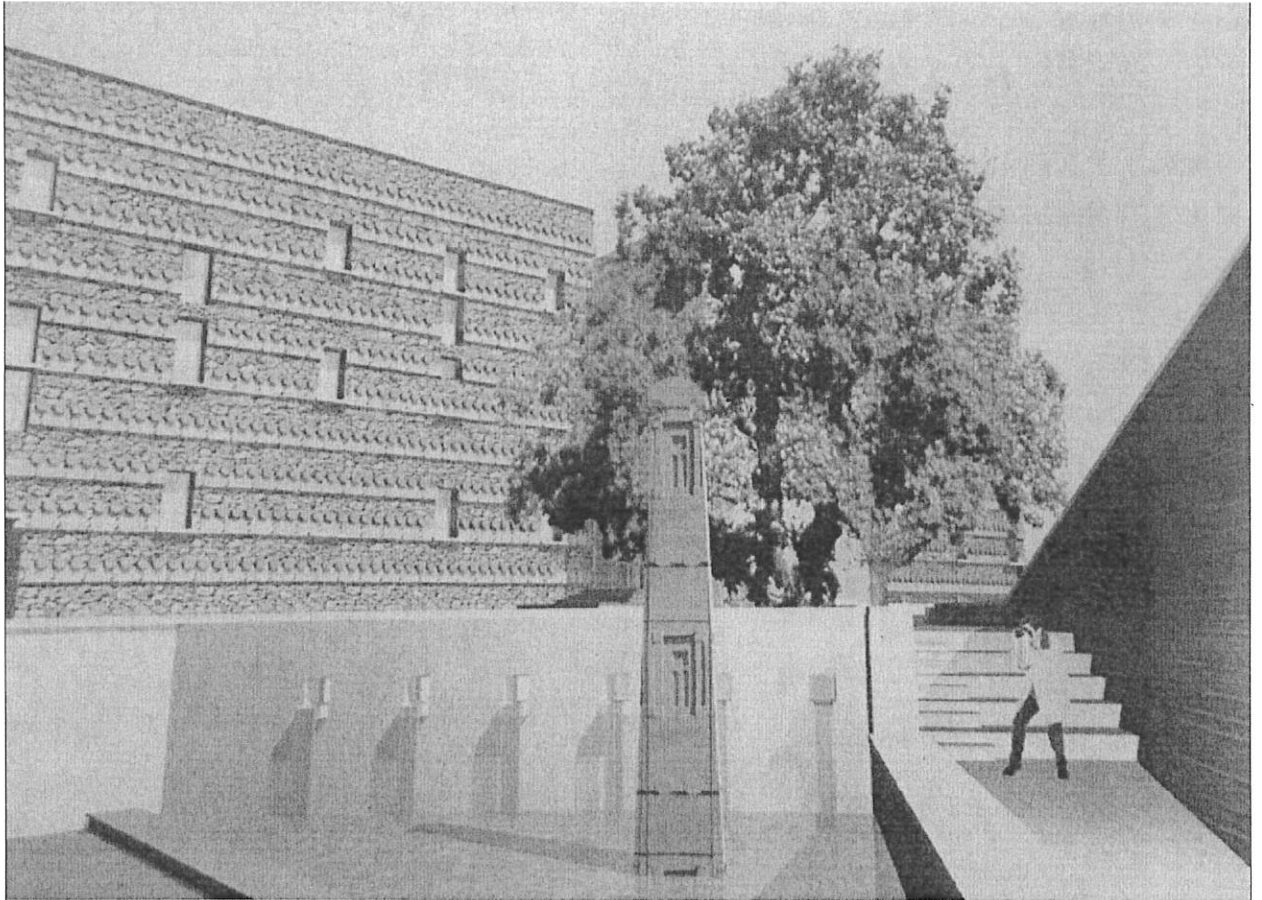
settlement zone within Aksum. To enhance the historic significance of the old settlement, the Aksum component of the Ethiopian Sustainable Tourism Development (ESTDP) Project is currently working to develop a Visitor Center and design the landscapes of the property and its surroundings and implement the design based on the Thematic Master Plan of the area.

3. Potential restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) within the protected area (Core Zone and Buffer Zone) that might be envisaged

The vacant old settlement of the historic site needs to be regenerated in such a way that will add value to the world heritage property.

Appendixes:

1. Final plan for the church museum



2. Final draft of the boundary of the property

