

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/1550/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 20 December 2016

H. E. Mrs Hanna Simon
Permanent Delegation of Eritrea to UNESCO
Ambassade de l'Erythrée
1, rue de Staël
75015 Paris

World Heritage List 2017

Asmara: Africa's Modernist City (Eritrea) – Interim report

Dear Madam,

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 2017. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation process.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to "Asmara: Africa's Modernist City" was carried out by Mr Giora Solar (Israel) from 23 to 31 July 2016. 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 13 October 2016, a letter requesting additional information was sent by ICOMOS on the following issues: further arguments to justify criterion (ii), rationale for drawing the boundaries, legal protection, integration of planning instruments, the management structure, system and plan as well as on the use of the Historic Urban Landscape approach. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided 14 November 2016 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

At the end of November 2016, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2017. The additional information provided by the State Party, together with mission and desk review reports were carefully examined by the Panel members. This process will conclude in March 2017.

We thank you for the availability of your Delegation to the meeting held on 25 November 2016 with some representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. The exchanges during this meeting were of great help for the third part of the ICOMOS Panel meeting. During its last part meeting, the Panel has identified areas where it considers that further information is needed. Therefore, we would be pleased if the State Party could consider the following points:

Justification for inscription

ICOMOS would be pleased if the State Party could further expand the additional information sent in November 2016 on aspects related to the design and construction of Asmara and of its urban and built fabric, e.g. on local materials and techniques and where and how they were used, the characteristics of the local architectural language, the attitudes of Asmara's planners and designers with regard to the local architecture, the local skills and expertise that were used to build the city, etc., that can contribute to further substantiate the justification of criterion (ii).

Could the State Party develop a detailed identification of the attributes that support the justification for inscription and the criteria, not limiting this analysis to individual buildings or their features, but expanding this to the urban dimension, the open spaces, the street scapes, the urban structure, the uses, etc. using as a reference the Historic Urban Landscape approach?

The survey of the attributes will be the key baseline for the management of the city and for the monitoring of its conditions as a living city.

Comparative Analysis

Could the State Party expand the comparative analysis to consider also the African context at large and not only Eastern Africa as well as cities originated or substantially modelled by other colonial powers than Italy?

Such an expanded comparison can only strengthen the case for Asmara but would also help in highlighting its specificities.

Boundaries

During the technical evaluation mission, a few issues related to the boundaries were identified by our mission expert. These concern:

- Part of Area 10 with residential function, on the west of the area adjacent to the school includes recent development and no feature that seems justify their inclusion in the nominated property;
- The zone in Area 8 indicated as 'special project' is currently occupied by American army barracks, which exhibit historic significance but not related to the proposed justification for inscription.

ICOMOS considers that both above - indicated zones would better serve the purpose of the buffer zone and therefore suggest to redefine the boundaries of the nominated property so as to include them in the buffer zone rather than in the nominated property.

Conservation

ICOMOS would also be pleased to receive additional information on what measures and mechanisms are envisaged to sustain the rehabilitation of the city and to assist the private owners to carry out the necessary conservation measures as well as to develop economic activities that respect the values of the nominated property in the spirit of the Historic Urban Landscape approach.

Protection and management

ICOMOS has understood that the protection of the nominated property has been granted by the Moratorium on new construction issued in 2001 and by the Regolamento Edilizio (1938).

In 2015, Eritrea has made an important step forward towards the legal protection of the nominated property, by issuing a new law – the Cultural Natural Heritage Proclamation n.177/2015 (CNHP2015) – that includes, among the categories of properties eligible for protection, immovable colonial heritage resources.

However, it is understood that to grant full protection on the basis of this Law, it is necessary that, as per art. 25, ad-hoc declarations are issued for specific areas as protected sites and that these declarations are not yet in place.

ICOMOS would therefore be grateful if the State Party could provide a list of the eligible immovable properties for which the State Party intends to issue such declarations and a time frame and priorities for the finalization of their issuing.

The planning system of a large city as Asmara is a complex one. ICOMOS has understood that the main planning instruments governing the development of Asmara are the following: the Strategic Urban Development Plan (SUDP – 2006) and the Outline Urban Planning Regulations (OUPR – 2005) and the above mentioned Regolamento Edilizio.

The State Party is developing important instruments for the conservation and management of the property, namely the Asmara Planning Norms and Technical Regulations (APNTR draft 2015) and a Conservation Master Plan (CMP) which are both expected to be completed by 2017.

ICOMOS would be pleased to receive further information on the following aspects:

- how do the four sub-zones mentioned by the OUPR – 2005 for the Historic Perimeter (city centre, commercial district, artisan district, residential- administrative) relate to the 15 zones of the nomination dossier and of the Conservation Master plan;
- how do the other zones (B,C, C1, etc.) relate to the buffer zone;
- when the Conservation Master Plan will be finalized and implemented;
- clarification on what type of instruments is currently in use to regulate the conservation activities on existing buildings.

ICOMOS considers crucial that the different instruments and regulations provide a clear framework for the control of transformations within the nominated property and its buffer zone. To this end, it would be useful that the State party could:

- clarify the hierarchy among the different planning instruments in place and being developed and what are expected to prevail above other ones, particularly within the nominated property and the buffer zone;
- provide a map indicating the overlapping zones of the different plans with a reference to their respective regulations as a tool for clarification;
- explain how the Interim Regulations (2003), which ICOMOS has understood as temporary regulations to be implemented during the Moratorium and never finalized and which the State Party reports being developed, will interact with the other regulations in place or being prepared.

ICOMOS has understood that the Strategic Urban Development Plan (chapter 4.3 Cultural Heritage and Tourism) envisages the "opening up of the Historic perimeter to building under the conditions of the Outline Urban Planning Regulation" – 2005.

ICOMOS considers that these regulations only provide for basic urban parameters (e.g. volume, height, Floor Area Ratio, etc.) but do not address the historic character of the urban landscape of Asmara and need to be complemented by indications concerning the architectural language, materials, the finishing, etc. as the Asmara Planning Norms and Technical Regulation (APNTR) and the Conservation Master Plan (CMP) seem to address only the built heritage for the purpose of conservation.

ICOMOS considers that ad – hoc guidelines for the new construction need to be set up based on the attributes of the nominated property as a matter of urgency.

The nomination dossier mentions the Tourism Development Plan (2000 – 2020) as an important instrument for the improvement of Asmara and envisages improvements of parks, museums, streets and pavements, public transport, electricity and water supply, waste management telecommunications.

ICOMOS notes that the above topics are all crucial for the full understanding of the planning and management system and would be grateful to receive more information about this Plan, its state of implementation and its provisions for Asmara and how they are integrated with the other plans and regulations.

With regard to the Management structure, it has been understood that a central management body is envisaged for the implementation of the Integrated Management Plan.

ICOMOS would be pleased if the State Party could confirm whether the Integrated Management Plan has been already approved and how it relates to the other plans and provisions being developed. If this has not been approved yet, it would be useful that a timeframe for its approval and implementation is defined by the State Party.

As for the management body, the ICOMOS Panel has found that this needs to be set up expeditiously and given a coordinating role for all relevant actors and provided with sufficient technical and financial means to perform its function.

The additional information received in November 2016 reports that the buffer zone shall be subject to rules and regulations provided by the Urban Conservation Master Plan (in draft).

In this regard, ICOMOS would be pleased to receive clarification on whether the Urban Conservation Master Plan coincides with the draft Conservation Master Plan being prepared.

The SUDP mentions, at Chapter 4.3, 22 projects of the Asmara Tourism Master Plan Concept.

In this regard ICOMOS recalls the requirements of paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* that encourages the State Party to provide information on any projects before any final decision is taken.

Community involvement

ICOMOS would be pleased if the State Party could provide further clarification on how private owners and local community have been involved in the nomination process. Considering that most of the nominated property is in private ownership, the understanding on the owners' part of the obligations and responsibilities deriving from World Heritage nomination and potential inscription is crucial to ensure their engagement in the protection and conservation of the nominated property.

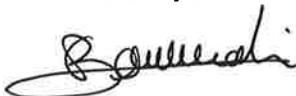
ICOMOS is aware that the implementation of the above will need a careful planning and an implementation calendar in order all action can be carried out properly. ICOMOS is willing and available to discuss the above with the State Party representatives via skype or any other means, if this is considered helpful for the State Party, prior to the date indicated below and possibly in January 2017.

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 2017 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 would be grateful if the State Party could keep its 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,



Gwenaëlle Bourdin
Director
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

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UNESCO World Heritage Centre