

# 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/AA/1519

Charenton-le-Pont, 23 January 2016

H. E. Mr Ahmet Altay Cengizer  
Permanent Delegation of Turkey to UNESCO  
Maison de l'UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis  
75732 Paris Cedex 15

World Heritage List 2017  
**Aphrodisias (Turkey) – Interim report**

Dear Sir,

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 "Aphrodisias" was carried out by Mr Assaad Seif (Lebanon) from 25 to 30 September 2016. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organisation and implementation of the mission.

On 29 September 2016, a letter requesting additional information was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding the boundary and mapping of the quarry component and information regarding the authenticity, integrity and state of conservation of the quarries. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 4 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, 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 26 November 2016 with some representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. During the last part of its meeting, the Panel discussed outstanding issues related to the nomination. This report will provide a short summary of the points considered.

At this stage, and based on the information received, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel is uncertain about whether Aphrodisias might have the potential to meet the requirements for Outstanding Universal Value. While further longer-term work might achieve this outcome, Outstanding Universal Value has not yet been demonstrated.

This evaluation by the ICOMOS Panel rests primarily on questions about the justification for inscription, the ability for the property to meet one or more of the criteria, and the need for more work on the comparative analysis. In addition, more work is needed to adequately describe the attributes of the nominated property, including the quarries and the specific qualities that link the city and the quarries.

While the full ICOMOS evaluation report will elaborate on these matters in more detail, they are briefly outlined below.

In terms of Outstanding Universal Value, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel discussed the specific reasons for which the site could be considered exceptional when compared to other ancient cities already inscribed on the World Heritage List, both within Turkey and within a larger Graeco-Roman context. Taking into account that Graeco-Roman cities are already relatively well-represented on the World Heritage List, the nomination

of Aphrodisias needs to be supported by arguments that clearly distinguish its historical and architectural characteristics in an exceptional way.

In the current proposal, criteria (ii), (iii), (iv) and (vi) have been applied. The ICOMOS Panel considered that the cases made for each of these vary in their strength and somewhat overlap; and that more clarity about the justification for Outstanding Universal Value could possibly be achieved by being more selective about the application of criteria. In particular, the case for criterion (vi) seemed weak; but further dialogue could also assist with the development of a more focused justification around one or two of the remaining criteria.

Greater elaboration of the comparative analysis – beyond the sites within Turkey – to place Aphrodisias within the entire context of Graeco-Roman cities is a needed initial step; and instances of quarrying and their relationships to artistic and cultural practices during this historical period are also required.

While ICOMOS considers that it might be possible to overcome these issues (possibly through a focus on quarrying and its contributions to the development of the school of sculpture at Aphrodisias), the degree of reformulation required cannot be evaluated within the limited remaining time allowed to the Advisory Bodies by the Operational Guidelines for the current evaluation cycle.

In terms of the ability to sufficiently appreciate the attributes that potentially contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value, the ICOMOS Panel considers that more work is needed on the documentation and description of the quarry elements of Aphrodisias (such as clear plans and drawings/images); as well as more insight into the historical processes of commissioning works, quarrying and transporting the marble. The authenticity, integrity and state of conservation of the quarries also need deepened description and clarification.

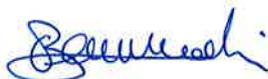
In general, the ICOMOS Panel considered that the quarries had not always been sufficiently incorporated into the required sections of the nomination dossier – including the systems of protection and management for the proposed serial World Heritage property. Because the additional information provided in November 2016 proposed new boundaries, there is some remaining confusion about these, and the total area in each component. Clear maps and the area of each component (in hectares) is needed, along with further clarifications about the ownership and legal protection of the nominated components and buffer zones. It is essential that all important site elements (such as quarries and tombs) are included in the property boundary in order to meet the requirements of integrity.

Given the range of substantial inter-related issues mentioned above and the short time which is allowed by the Operational Guidelines to address them, ICOMOS considers that the work will need to extend beyond the current evaluation cycle.

In closing, please be assured that ICOMOS well understands that the issues identified by the ICOMOS Panel will be met with deep disappointment by the many experts and local and national authorities that have been working closely together for some years already. If requested, ICOMOS would be ready and willing to work with the States Parties once the current cycle is over to consider possible ways forward, along the same collaborative lines as has been undertaken in recent years with several States Parties in order to achieve a positive outcome in a future cycle.

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

Yours faithfully,



Gwenaëlle Bourdin  
Director  
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to Ministry of Culture and Tourism  
UNESCO World Heritage Centre