Executive Summary

State Party
Denmark

State, Province or Region
Greenland, Qeqqata Municipality

Name of Property
Aasivissuit – Nipisat. Inuit Hunting Ground between Ice and Sea

Geographical Coordinates to the Nearest Second
Coordinates of the central point:
N 67° 3’ 50.15” W 51° 25’ 59.54”

Textual description of the boundaries of the nominated property
The nominated property covers 417,800 ha and is situated just north of the Arctic Circle in the central part of West Greenland. The c. 235 km long and up to 20 km wide area extends from the sea in the west to the dynamic ice sheet in the east.

For easy recognition, the borders of the nominated property follow the natural lines of the landscape,
**Aasivissuit – Nipisat**

Inuit Hunting Ground between Ice and Sea

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**Location of the property within the region.**

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**Topographic map and boundaries of the nominated property.**
such as fjords, lakes, hilltops, waterways or watersheds. In fjords, lakes, sounds and sea passages, the boundary is set midway between the nearest land on either side, and towards the open sea it lies at the territorial baseline. To the east, the boundary is on the ice sheet when the first people arrived in the area. This corresponds to the approximate position of the ice edge when the first people arrived in the area.

The exact location of the boundary is defined by a list of coordinates connected by straight lines (Table 0.1).

The 417,800 ha property is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes that convey its significance, and it does not
suffer from the adverse effects of development or neglect. Together with the fact that there is just one landowner (Government of Greenland), these factors have been crucial to nominating the property without a buffer zone. The borders are, furthermore, defined such that a strong visual impression of the cultural landscape is ensured.

Criteria under which the property is nominated

(iii) Archaeological traces of the traditional, nomadic Inuit hunting culture are visible throughout the arctic landscape of Aasivissuit – Nipisat, between the coast of the Davis Strait and the ice sheet. The property contains a complete suite of ruin sites, representing all epochs and all principal seasonal activities, from the 4200-year-old site of Nipisat, to hundreds of visible ruins from the Thule culture (AD 1250-1700), with Aasivissuit and its impressive caribou drives, and the historical period (AD 1700–1900). At the settlement of Sarfannguit, the active fishing and hunting culture links present land use to the old, traditional, sustainable hunting cultures. Aasivissuit – Nipisat is a ‘continuing landscape’ with significant material evidence of its evolution over time.

(v) The traditional seasonal migrations and variation in hunting practices since the first people arrived c. 2400 BC have left ancient camp sites in all parts of the landscape. The route from the winter settlements to the summer camps can be followed as a time-worn trail from the west to the east. Along this ancient trail, summer camps with dwelling ruins, inussuit (cairns), graves and caches tell a story of resource abundance. Ruins of all major prehistoric features are present in Aasivissuit – Nipisat, and all of these ancient monuments remain in their original locations, making them a first-class record of the history of hunter-gatherer resilience in an arctic environment.
Draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Brief synthesis
The nominated cultural landscape lies at the heart of the largest ice-free area in Greenland which, in combination with the transitional coastal zone between the ‘open water area’ and the high-arctic area of land-fast winter ice, has made it exceptional as a hunting ground for people through millennia. This long history is visible in the landscape in the form of the many ruins and traces left by the Arctic people, including winter settlements with ruins of turf houses along the coast, inussuk (cairns) and trails leading from the coast to the caribou hunting camps and remarkable caribou drive systems in the interior. The area provides the most complete and best-preserved testimony of arctic hunting traditions from 2500 BC onwards, providing evidence of sustainable land use, based on seasonal migrations between coast and interior. Colonial ruins on the coast reflect the arrival of Europeans in the 18th century and their interaction with Inuit.

Today, hunters with families continue their seasonal travels, staying and hunting in the same places as their predecessors and thereby forge creating a link between past and present.

Justification for Criteria
Criterion (iii): To bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared.

For millennia, peoples in Aasivissuit – Nipisat have exploited the locally available resources and have adapted their lifestyles and homes to the seasonal rhythm. Due to its geography and climatic conditions this specific area offers several options for ‘the good life’. Today, the area remains virtually unchanged. The long tradition of locally sustainable land use can be read more easily in landscape and culture than in many other places. The landscape, the camp sites and archaeological remains therefore have outstanding universal value.

The area has the well-documented Paleo-Inuit site of Nipisat and hundreds of visible ruins from the Thule culture (c. AD 1250-1700) and the historical period (c. AD 1700-1900). Seven of the best preserved and most accessible of these localities have been selected as key sites.
for interpretation of the traditional housing and life in West Greenland. The settlement of Sarfanguit is an active community, where the fishing and hunting culture links the present sea and land use to the traditional sustainable nomadic hunting societies of the Thule, Dorset and Saqqaq cultures. Aasivissuit – Nipisat is therefore a ‘continuing landscape’ with significant material evidence of its evolution over time (Mitchell 2009).

The seven sites are focal points for humans living off the land and the sea. The landscape settings, in combination with impressive archaeological remains, testify to the traditional land use in time and space throughout the nominated area, between the inland ice sheet and the open sea.

Criterion (vi): To be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.

Ruins of dwellings, graves and hunting features are preserved in their original settings, where they testify to the traditional seasonal migrations and variation in hunting practices throughout the year, as has been the case since the arrival of the first people in c. 2500 BC. Winter settlements focusing on the hunting of seals are situated on the outer coast, spring settlements with fishing for capelin and char are situated in the fjords, and summer camps where migrating caribou could be intercepted in extensive drive systems are situated in the interior. The route from the winter settlements to the summer camps can be followed as an old well-trodden trail running eastwards from the head of Maligiaq Fjord. Along this ancient trail are summer camps with dwelling ruins as well as numerous inussuit (way-marker cairns), graves and caches conveying the story of abundance. Ruins of all the different house types are present in Aasivissuit – Nipisat, and the situation of these ancient monuments in their original settings makes them first class scenes for conveying the history of hunter gatherer resilience in an arctic environment.

Box 2 - Principal cultural sequences in the prehistory of Greenland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2500 BC</td>
<td>Independence I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>Greenlandic Dorset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Late Dorset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1200</td>
<td>Norse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>Thule</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principal cultural sequences in the prehistory of Greenland

Independence I c. 2400-1900 BC
Saqqaq culture c. 2400-500 BC
Greenlandic Dorset c. 800 BC-AD
Thule culture c. AD 1250-1700

Statement of Integrity

The property contains all the elements necessary to express the outstanding universal value of the Inuit hunting landscape, including an exceptionally large number of ruin sites in the form of winter dwellings, graves, caches and the great summer camp of Aasivissuit, which in addition to dwelling structures hosts the largest communal hunting system known from Greenland, as well as temporary dwellings, hunting
systems and inussuit. All the principal epochs, from
the Saqqaq culture of 2400 BC, to Greenlandic Dorset,
Thule, historical Inuit and colonial settlers are repre-
sented within the nominated area.

The property has an area of 417,800 ha and is therefore
an adequate size to ensure the complete representa-
tion of the features and processes that testify to its sig-
nificance, and it does not suffer from the adverse effects
development or neglect. Together with the fact that
there is just one landowner (Government of Greenland)
and that any future industrial development in the area
has been explicitly rejected, these factors have been cru-
tial to nominating the property without a buffer zone.

Statement of Authenticity
Aasivissuit – Nipisat is situated in the part of Greenland
where the post-glacial rebound is greatest (as explained
in chapter 2.a.i). Consequently, more ruin sites here than
anywhere else in Greenland and in many other parts of
the Arctic can be anticipated to have avoided destruc-
tion by coastal erosion. This positive effect of the post-
glacial rebound is particularly relevant for the earliest
sites, dating from the Saqqaq (2400-500 BC) and Dorset
(800 BC - AD 1) cultures, since these ancient camp sites
have often become eroded or submerged in other parts
of Greenland where coastal lands have been subject to a
process of depression during the last 2000 years.

Since the prey species have remained the same for
thousands of years, so have the locations of the settle-
ments. There may have been local changes with respect
to which part of an island was preferred for settlement;
but in general there has been reuse of good locations
through millennia. Reuse is part of life in the Arctic
and this is also evident on sites that span hundreds of
years: Suitable stones from one structure may have
been removed from their contexts to be reused in
later structures at the same locality.

Requirements for protection and management
The nominated area is owned by Naalakkersuisut
(Government of Greenland) and administered by
Qeqqata Municipality. The nominated area, and all
surrounding landscapes, are consequently adminis-
tered by the same authorities. Currently an area in the
easternmost part of the nominated area is protected
as the southern part of the larger Ramsar area no. 386,
Eqalummiiut Nunaaq and Nussutup Nunaq, extend-
ing northwards along the margin of the ice sheet be-
yond the area nominated as the Aasivissuit – Nipisat
World Heritage Site.

The Greenland National Museum and Archives is the
administrative authority for protected monuments, and
the Ministry of Mineral Resources – which issues raw
material licences – has agreed not to issue prospecting
licences within the nominated World Heritage Site.
Local stewardship for monitoring key localities and
general status will be encouraged in the settlements
of Sarfannguit and Kangerlusuaq.

The legislative basis and organisation of the site man-
agement will ensure that developmental or economic
challenges will not affect the property in any signifi-
cant manner.

Specific long-term expectations
Natural, long-term threats to the archaeological sites
are very limited. The impact of increased tourism may,
on the other hand, have an effect if visitor numbers in-
crease significantly. Increased traffic may result in
degradation of vegetation and thereby erosion. Moni-
toring and infrastructure measures, such as repeat
photography, visual inspection, marked paths and no-
go-zones, described in the management plan, will en-
sure that such processes remain under the full control
of the authorities.

The continuing use of the land has the potential to
degradation ruins and sites on a local scale, but monitoring
and management will be implemented to reduce dam-
age to historical resources in the vicinity of the camps
used today. On a larger geographic scale, sustainable
continuing land use by the citizens of Sarfannguit,
Sisimiut and Kangerlusuaq keeps local knowledge
alive and underpins the protection of the site against
conflicting development.
Executive Summary

Name and contact information of official local institution/agency

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Makkorsip Aqq. 2  
DK-3911 Sisimiut, Greenland  
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View to the west over the lake district in the easternmost inland region of Aasivissuit–Nipisat. Photo: Visit Greenland.

Cutter entering Ikertooq Fjord from the narrows by the settlement of Sarfannguit.

Cutter entering Ikertooq Fjord from the narrows by the settlement of Sarfannguit.