

# 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/1560/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 22 December 2017

H. E. Mrs Maria Teresa Lizaranzu Perinat  
Permanent Delegation of the Kingdom of Spain  
to UNESCO  
Maison de l'UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis  
75732 Paris CEDEX 15

World Heritage List 2018

## **Caliphate City of Medina Azahara (Spain) – Interim report and additional information request**

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 2018. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation process.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to "Caliphate City of Medina Azahara" was carried out by Attilio Petruccioli (Italy) from 25 to 29 September 2017. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organization and implementation of the mission.

At the end of November 2017, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2018. 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 2018.

We thank you for the availability of your Delegation to the meeting held on Friday 24 November 2017 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:

### **Name of the property**

With regards to the official name of the nominated property, "Caliphate City of Medina Azahara", the ICOMOS Panel would be pleased if the State Party could provide further explanation on the reasons why the Arabic, historical and presumably authentic, name of Madinat al-Zahara has not been retained.

### **History and development**

The ICOMOS Panel has understood that the Caliphate City of Medina Azahara is in many ways related to the Caliphate of Cordoba. The nature and extent of such relationship is not explicitly presented in the nomination dossier. Therefore, the ICOMOS Panel would welcome further information explaining the historical, cultural, social and political relationship between Medina Azahara and Cordoba.

Could the State Party further clarify if there are any indications of cultural contacts and exchanges between the Umayyad al-Andalous and the Spanish (Christian) civilization around the nominated property, with regards, for example, to architecture, building techniques, materials, ornaments, or choice of location in the landscape?

#### **Buffer zone**

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission noticed that there are several illegal settlements namely in Cordoba la Vieja, Las Pitas and Gorgoja II (348 homes in total, comprising cottages of one or two floors) that might compromise the viewsheds between the nominated component parts and within the proposed buffer zone. Could the State Party provide further information regarding the proposed measures and mechanisms in place to prevent new illegal constructions; mitigate the edges of the illegal settlements with hard and soft landscaping; and monitor the sensitive areas where the pressures for urbanization is higher?

#### **Protection**

With regards to the layout of the buffer zone, the perimeters covered by the Special Protection Plan and the Property of Cultural Interest do not coincide in the area of the A-431 Cordoba to Palma del Rio road. Could the State Party please provide further information regarding this apparent inconsistency related to the perimeters of protection of the nominated property?

#### **Conservation**

The nomination dossier states that "Throughout its century or so of life, the archaeological site of Medina Azahara has passed through a logical evolution in the criteria of its conservation work" (page 104), but the details about the conservation doctrine used at the site remain unclear. Could the State Party please provide further information on: (i) What were the changes in conservation doctrine and the differing criteria that were adopted? (ii) How have they logically evolved over time? (iii) How does the site show this evolution?

The ICOMOS Panel understood that there are incomplete records of previous archaeological excavations and investigations undertaken at the archaeological site before 1985 and there are also no records of archaeological surveys before that date. Therefore, the ICOMOS Panel would appreciate if the State Party could provide further information regarding the actual situation of the records before 1985 and the proposed measures to mitigate this information deficit.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission noted problems with the conservation of the borders of the excavated areas and holes made by previous excavations, namely those areas south and west of the House of the Pool and the south-west corner of the Upper Garden. Could the State Party provide the timeframe for the implementation of the comprehensive project to control and manage the excavated edges?

During the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, other issues related to the conservation were identified by our mission expert. These concerns:

- Extensive surfaces of ataurique decorative pieces are lying on the floor of the Outer Walkway, the north-eastern quadrant of the Upper Garden and the Lower Garden, an area now closed to the public.
- The fact that the main part of the visitor's route runs along the original floors of calcarenite limestone pavements preserved in situ, affecting their preservation.
- Some interventions at the site still require further work due to crumbling and loss of ashlar, including the Outer Covered Walkway and the House of the Pool.
- Some excavated parts (e.g. the Hall of the double columns and two areas to the west and the south of the House of the Pool) are affected by degradation and erosion and need particular urgent attention.

Although some solutions to issues raised above have been envisaged and discussed during the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, the ICOMOS Panel would welcome further information regarding specific

