Draft Decision: 42 COM 7B.62

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/18/42.COM/7B,

2. Recalling Decisions 38 COM 8B.14 and 40 COM 7B.67, adopted at its 38th (Doha 2014) and 40th (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016) sessions respectively,

3. Welcomes the progress made by the State Party in following up on earlier Committee concerns about management planning, including the review of the Management Plan and the elaboration and submission of Action Plans for visitation management and archaeological heritage management;

4. Notes with significant concern that current visitation has already increased beyond the previously anticipated two million visitors per annum and is further anticipated to increase to 3.5 million visitors per annum by 2020, and strongly urges the State Party to undertake continue the necessary studies to enable a better understanding of impacts on the property’s Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) from high and rapidly increasing visitation, and to establish and enforce a strict limit to visitation to ensure it does not exceed the carrying capacity of the property, in order to conserve its OUV, as well as its biodiversity as a key part of its aesthetic value;
5. Also welcomes that the dismantling of the illegally built concrete walkway at Cai Ha Mountain has been completed; started;

6. Reiterates its concern that measures taken continue to be inadequate to balance tourism development and heritage protection, as demonstrated by the illegal construction of a concrete walkway at Cai Ha Mountain within the property, and requests the State Party to:

   a) Further strengthen the regulations for tourism facilities,

   b) Ensure the establishment of an appropriate consultation mechanism within the Management Board and among all stakeholders of the property, in order to:
      (i) Ascertain that a balanced approach be made considering aspects relating tourism, heritage management and nature conservation as a whole,

      (ii) Apply a clearer reporting protocol concerning any new and major developments within the property and ensure the necessary prior consultation of the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines,

   c) Ensure that current measures remain in place to limit overcrowding, including the establishment of a clearly justified maximum daily quota for peak and normal visitation days,

   d) Undertake further assessment of the facilities and services required to adequately service current and future visitation, taking into account the substantial current numbers and the revised future estimates, including the extrapolated festival day peaks of up to 50,000 visitors,

   e) Further develop the sections within the Management Plan concerning archaeological heritage, in particular staff training and capacity building, so that the national human resources are continuously provided to ensure a long term and successful management of the archaeological heritage of the property;

7. Also requests the State Party to continue to provide adequate financial and human resources for systematic environmental monitoring, as an integral part of management planning and operations;
8. Considers that the establishment of a replica film set impacts adversely on authenticity and is not an appropriate heritage promotion strategy for a World Heritage property, and further requests the State Party to ensure that any heritage promotion and marketing undertaken within the property is consistent with interpretation of its OUV;

9. Requests furthermore the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property at the time of revision of the property management plan at the end of 2019 to assess its current state of conservation, in particular in light of inadequately planned and managed tourism and associated infrastructure and service provision developments;

10. Noting that the likelihood of the construction of a new urban university area in Bai Dinh is considered very low by the State Party has no intention to construct a new university in the Bai Dinh area, nevertheless reiterates its request to the State Party to submit, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, detailed information on any proposed development projects within the property, its buffer zone and setting for review by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies prior to any decisions being taken that could be difficult to reverse, including new parking infrastructure;

11. Also strongly urges the State Party to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) for any major developments within the property and the buffer zone as a timely and appropriate method of assessing both individual and cumulative impacts of current and planned developments on this small and fragile property, taking into account potential impacts on the OUV of the property in line with the IUCN and ICOMOS guidelines on impact assessments for the proposed projects, prior to allowing any such developments to take place;

12. Encourages the State Party to continue to work with the Advisory Bodies on further refining its efforts, including the integration of biodiversity conservation into management and decision making;

13. Requests moreover the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2019, 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 44th session in 2019.