



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

## AMENDMENT

<b>Item of the Agenda</b>	<b>42 COM 8B.16</b>
<b>Amended Draft Decision</b>	<b>42 COM</b>
<b>Amendment submitted by the Delegation of....</b>	<b>Kuwait, China, Angola, Cuba, Burkina Faso, Bosnia Herzegovina, Tunisia, Bahrain.</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>28/06/2018</b>

### TEXT

*The World Heritage Committee,*

- 1. Having examined Documents WHC/18/42.COM/8B and WHC/18/42.COM/INF.8B1;*
- 2. Inscribes the **Al-Ahsa Oasis, an Evolving Cultural Landscape, Saudi Arabia**, on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (iii), (iv) and (v)**;*
- 3. Adopts the following Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:*

**Brief synthesis**

*Al-Ahsa Oasis is located in the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, bordered on the North by Abqaiq province, on the east by the Arabian Gulf, on the west by the desert of Ad-Dahna and on the south by the desert of Ar-Rub' Al-Khali (the Empty Quarter). Al-Ahsa is nominated as an “evolving cultural landscape” representing a landscape that evolved over millennia and continues to evolve, and presents as well a way of life in the Gulf region of the Arabian Peninsula. This evolving landscape consists of gardens, canals, springs, wells, an agricultural drainage lake, as well as historic buildings. Consisting of twelve component parts forming the largest oasis in the world with more than 2.5 million palm trees. Urban fabric and archaeological sites that are seen to represent the evolution of an ancient cultural tradition and the traces of sedentary human occupation of the Gulf region of the Arabian Peninsula from the Neolithic Period up to the present. The landscape of Al-Ahsa in the past and now represents the different phases of the oasis’s evolution and the interaction of natural and cultural heritage.*

**Criterion (iii):** *The continuity of the oasis agricultural tradition is represented by a permanent and evolving landscape with an agricultural organization based*

*upon the distribution of the spring water through a network of open-air canals. The Oasis of Al-Ahsa cultural landscape materializes the vivacity and modernity of this specific land-use tradition and shows its continuing relevance at the local and regional scale.*

**Criterion (iv):** *This large cultural landscape is composed of different zones covering the oasis' gardens, mountains caves, villages, mosques and springs, but also archaeological sites and a small section of the historic center of Al-Hofuf with the main monuments embodying the political control over the area and its commercial role throughout the past centuries. The vestiges of the villages, fortresses, mosques, markets and houses, though often in a ruinous shape, preserve a complete catalogue of the architectural elements composing the urban settlement of al-Ahsa from the early Islamic period to the Saudi Kingdom.*

**Criterion (v):** *The oasis is an outstanding example of traditional human settlement developed in a desert environment exemplifying the intimate link between landscape, natural resources and the human efforts to settle the land. The rich water table close to the surface permitted the growth of a large oasis settlement. Water was originating from surface springs and drawn from wells reaching the shallow water table. Some of these springs and wells are still visible in the site, living memory of the traditional farming techniques.*

### **Integrity**

*The assemblage of Victorian Gothic and Art Deco buildings retains a high degree of integrity in visual, spatial and planning terms with the Rajabai Clock tower as the visual high point and the Oval Maidan, which is a unifying element and a centrepiece offering to view both the Victorian and the Art Deco groups of buildings. It retains its integrity as a planned urban development. The wider settings of the property are vulnerable to urban development pressures.*

### **Authenticity**

*The oasis, in the past, was (and remains) a major source of agricultural crops, the most important of which is palm dates. The oasis of al-Ahsa, with its different and interconnected sectors, was even before the 1960s and the introduction of "mass production" industrial proportions. Palm dates are the main agricultural staple of Al-Ahsa oasis, local communities are involved in packaging and making use of modern technologies to assure the wide spread marketing and distribution of their product. As the State party is in favor of grassroots organic farmers, the Saudi Government then graciously donates the surplus of palm dates from Al-Ahsa to the World Food Program.*

*Strict Regulations for farms permit developments on the edges of roads and highways, as well as up to 15% of the agricultural parcel set in private farms for agricultural services or rural housing under the controls of the municipal building code. Moreover, a royal decree issued preventing the conversion of agricultural parcels into urban uses. In addition, development of the surrounding areas in Al-Asfar Lake is still under evaluation and has not been adopted nor developed.*

### **Management and protection requirements**

*Al-Ahsa Oasis is protected under the Saudi Law of Antiquities, Museums and Urban Heritage, Royal Decree No. 9/M (dated, 09/01/1436 AH corresponding to*

01/11/2014). A revised law for Antiquities, Museums and Urban Heritage amended by the Royal Decree M/3 in 2015 based on the Saudi Antiquity Law issued by the Royal Decree No. 26/M. Amended in 1972.

The new Antiquity Law, introduced and details the concept of Urban Heritage protection, paving the way for effective protection of historic monuments and districts inside the Oasis.

The Agricultural parcels protected by the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 119 dated in Jan 26, 2016.

After reviewing the petition received from Royal Court No. 39543 dated September 3, 2013 and the telegram from the Ministry of Interior No. 107682 dated July 24, 2013, and the minutes by the Ministerial Committee, formed by the royal decree No. 4627/M.B dated May 18, 2009, regarding the cessation of segmenting of agricultural parcels across all Saudi Regions.

4. Recommends that the State Party gives consideration to the following:

a) State party is to consider that the monitoring regime, once in place, could be considered valid In a general sense, but could be improved by more precise periodicity,

b) the need for the management of the oasis to include a specific component of studying, understanding, monitoring and conserving the biodiversity of the oasis as an integral part of its heritage protection and sustainability,

5. Decides that the name of the property remains: **Al-Ahsa Oasis, an Evolving Cultural Landscape**