

Decisions of the International Coordinating Committee on the Serial Transnational World Heritage Nomination of the Silk Roads

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, 4-5 December 2018

Background

As a result of international cooperation efforts, including the four previous Coordinating Committee meetings held between 2009 and 2015, two World Heritage nomination dossiers were prepared. These were examined at the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee in June 2014 (Doha, Qatar), and the World Heritage Committee decided to inscribe the property “**Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang’an - Tian-shan Corridor**”, a nomination submitted by China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, on the World Heritage List. At the same session, the World Heritage nomination “**Silk Roads: Penjikent-Samarkand-Poykent Corridor**”, submitted by Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, was referred back to the States Parties so that they may implement the Committee’s recommendations, taking into account the advice received from ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre.

The 5th Coordinating Committee Meeting brought together National Focal Points and experts from 13 countries, which included 11 countries that are members of the Silk Roads International Coordinating Committee (Afghanistan, China, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) and two partner countries (Azerbaijan, Russian Federation). Representatives from the ICOMOS International Conservation Center-Xi’an (IICC-X), the Secretariat of the Coordinating Committee, were also invited to the meeting, along with UNESCO representatives and international resource persons, including the International Institute for Central Asian Studies (IICAS) and University College of London (UCL), to support the discussions on technical assistance and cooperation.

The meeting, a special event during the 2018 year of ‘Turkmenistan is the Heart of the Great Silk Road’, was partially financed by the UNESCO/Japan Funds-in-Trust, via the project “*Support for the Silk Roads World Heritage Sites in Central Asia (Phase II)*”, and the Chinese and the Kazakhstan Governments’ voluntary contributions to the World Heritage Fund.

Aim

The aim of the December 2018 Ashgabat Meeting was to share useful past experiences and put forward a clear, realistic vision and objectives of the Silk Roads Coordinating Committee for the preservation of land route cultural heritage sites along the Silk Roads.

In particular, it aimed to:

1. Review and update the Terms of Reference of the Silk Roads Coordinating Committee to find ways of improving the working methods;
2. Elect two new co-chairs of the Coordinating Committee;

3. Strengthen the effective monitoring of the state of conservation on the first inscribed serial transnational World Heritage property, “Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang’an – Tianshan Corridor” (China, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan), in order to ensure an enhanced coordination for the protection and management of cultural heritage sites;
4. Review the current status of the referred nomination “Silk Roads Penjikent-Samarkand-Poykent Corridor” (Tajikistan and Uzbekistan);
5. Review the progress of the Silk Road World Heritage Nominations processes, including the South Asian Silk Roads (Nepal, Bhutan, China and India), and the Fergana-Syrdarya Silk Roads Heritage Corridor (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan);
6. Present the outcomes of the UNESCO Expert Meeting on Maritime Silk Routes (London, May 2017).

Furthermore, the meeting discussed the potential needs regarding the development of an ICOMOS Silk Roads Thematic Study covering Eastern Asia and Western Asia, at the request of the participating countries.

Main Outcomes

The participants of the meeting jointly decided the following:

1. To update the Terms of Reference of the Intergovernmental Coordinating Committee using virtual communication channels;
2. To welcome the interest of the Russian Federation and Azerbaijan to join the Coordinating Committee;
3. To elect Professor Zhou LYU, Director of National Heritage Centre, Tsinghua University (China) and Mrs Bakyt AMANBAEVA, Director, Centre for Cultural Heritage, Institute of History and Cultural Heritage, National Academy of Sciences (the Kyrgyz Republic) as the new co-chairs of the Coordinating Committee on the Serial Transnational World Heritage Nomination of the Silk Roads;
4. To further strengthen the collaboration between China, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan on the effective monitoring of the state of conservation of the first inscribed Serial Transnational World Heritage property “Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang’an – Tianshan Corridor”;
5. To request that all countries involved in the Serial Transnational World Heritage property be engaged in reporting on the state of conservation of the properties, including by submitting joint state of conservation reports for the examination by the World Heritage Centre and/or the Advisory Bodies;
6. To refocus the efforts of the Coordinating Committee from listing to conservation, with an emphasis on enhancing coordination around the protection and management of the Silk Roads cultural heritage properties, especially in view of the critical state of conservation issues that some cultural heritage properties in Central Asia are facing, notably the property “Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor”, which were examined at recent sessions of the World Heritage Committee (See Decisions **40 COM 7B.34**, **41 COM 7B.88** and **42 COM. 7B.5**) ;

7. To call upon all participating State Parties to allocate the necessary funds and resources for values-oriented documentation, conservation, planning, management, coordination and monitoring along the Silk Roads heritage corridors, as well as for the preparation of nomination dossiers;
8. To reinforce the existing Expert Group of representatives from Central Asia, South Asia and China, in collaboration with the IICC–Xi'an, as the Secretariat of the Coordinating Committee, using virtual communication channels;
9. To call upon the participating countries, in particular the respective government agencies, UNESCO National Commissions and/or relevant authorities in charge of World Heritage, to enhance technical capacity for the preparation of the Silk Roads World Heritage nominations (both national and transnational);
10. To develop and implement an appropriate management system for the potential Silk Roads nominations (both national and transnational), in line with the revised Terms of Reference of the Coordinating Committee;
11. To enhance the exchange of information related to the required documentation for the preparation of nomination dossiers;
12. To welcome further work on the referred nomination “Silk Roads Penjikent-Samarkand-Poykent Corridor” by Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; to acknowledge with satisfaction that the International Institute for Central Asian Studies (IICAS) was entrusted with the role of Secretariat and coordinating body for this specific heritage corridor, and to also welcome the support extended by other members of the Coordinating Committee;
13. To welcome Turkmenistan’s joining of the “Silk Roads Penjikent-Samarkand-Poykent Corridor” nomination process, in order to extend this nomination to the territory of Turkmenistan with the Karakum section “*Amul-Merv*”;
14. To encourage close consultation and coordination between Bhutan, China, India and Nepal on the preparation of the South Asian Silk Road World Heritage Nominations, as agreed upon in 2014, and to encourage Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Pakistan to apply for the Upstream Process mechanism, as per the request of the World Heritage Committee (Decisions **42 COM 9A** and **42 COM 12A**);
15. To encourage close consultation and coordination between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan regarding the preparation of the Fergana-Syrdarya Silk Roads Heritage Corridor World Heritage Nomination process; to acknowledge with satisfaction that the Ministry of Cultural and Sport of Kazakhstan was entrusted with the role of Secretariat and coordinating body for this specific heritage corridor, as agreed upon in Almaty, in October 2018;
16. Taking note of the outcomes of the UNESCO Expert Meeting on Maritime Silk Routes (London, May 2017), to consider that the Maritime Silk Routes do not fall within the mandate of the present Coordinating Committee, and that it is therefore more appropriate to look at the Maritime Silk Routes using a different nomination approach; and to encourage interested States Parties to establish a coordination mechanism similar to that of the land routes, if necessary;
17. To recognize the need for further development of an ICOMOS Silk Roads Thematic Study covering Eastern Asia and Western Asia, at the request of the participating countries.

The meeting welcomed the proposal of Iran to co-host with UNESCO the next meeting of the Coordinating Committee, which is to take place in autumn 2019.

Delegates of the 5th Meeting of the Coordinating Committee on the Serial Transnational World Heritage Nomination of the Silk Roads expressed their gratitude to the Government of Turkmenistan, in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Turkmen National Commission for UNESCO, the Ministry of Culture and other authorities in Turkmenistan for hosting the meeting, for their warm hospitality and support, and for providing favourable conditions that allowed the successful organization of the meeting. They also expressed their thanks to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, the UNESCO Office in Tehran, IICC-Xi'an, IICAS and the international resource persons for facilitating the meeting.
