EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the past two years, following the inscription of *The Rock arts in the Hail Region of Saudi Arabia* on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage with its partners have been actively implementing the Management Plan presented in the Nomination File submitted to UNESCO.

Achieving a series of major results has since the inscription:

- Expanding the Buffer zone from 1.0 Kilometres to 1.5 Kilometres for the JABAL UM SINMAN Component of the Serial Nomination.
- Tourism management strategy developed to include an interpretation strategy addressing the increase in visitation numbers as part of the management plan.
- Framing and masking rain water diversionary dam near JUBBAH with typical low desert vegetation.
- Monitoring Indicators for development and tourism impacts on the attributes of the nominated serial property mechanism.

Though much still needs to be done and the on-site situation is still not clear with the historic site, the inscription of *The Rock arts in the Hail Region of Saudi Arabia* on the UNESCO World Heritage List has already been instrumental in catalysing the efforts and in creating a new positive approach. At the national and local levels, placing Hail’s cultural heritage at the centre of the site development policies.
Rock arts in the Hail Region of Saudi Arabia
State of Conservation Report
November 2018

Introduction
Following the inscription of *Rock arts in the Hail Region of Saudi Arabia* on the World Heritage List in July 2015, the World Heritage Committee requested Saudi Arabia to submit a *State of Conservation Report* on the property to the discussion in the 2019 World Heritage Committee. The State Party considers that preparing a State of Conservation report is an opportunity to support the daily initiatives carried out on-site by technical teams, and an occasion at both national and international levels to assess the results achieved and issues that addressed the need for the long-term preservation and revitalization of the property. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is pleased to comply with the Decision 41 COM 7B 6.5, and to bring all relevant requested information to the attention of the World Heritage Committee.

Decision: 41 COM 7B.65

Rock Art in the Hail Region of Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia) (C 1472)
The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/17/41.COM/7B,
2. Recalling Decisions 39 COM 7B.11 and 40 COM 8B.50, adopted at its 39th (Bonn, 2015) and 40th (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016) sessions respectively;
3. Welcomes the actions undertaken by the State Party to address the recommendations of the Committee;
4. Requests the State Party to clarify whether there are any impediments to formalizing an extended buffer zone of 1 to 1.5 km, as originally recommended by the Committee;
5. Also requests the State Party to specifically consider in the management plan for the property the success of the heritage work, the visitor infrastructure work, and the proposed monitoring;
6. Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 2018, 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 43rd session in 2019.

Structure of the Report
The introductory paragraph presents background information about the evolution of the national heritage policies; the following paragraphs comply with the World Heritage Committee requests and provide updated information on each point underlined in the Decision text. A brief conclusion points tackling out the issues to in the future and achieving objectives. Representing images and plans as Annex to this report.

Background Information
The Nomination File presented a complete view of the site situation in both the erial property (JABAL UMM SINMAN, JABAL AL-MANJOR, and JABAL RATA), and underlined the fact the complex and ambitious projects that would inevitably require an extended on-site
implementation timeframe. The State Party considers that the Inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List is not the “end” of the process, but rather the “start” of a new phase for safeguarding this unique cultural site.

After the submission of the file, and since the inscription, the state party has continued to act both at the administrative and technical levels to implement plans presented in the Nomination files submitted in February 2014. A breakthrough for the preservation represented by the approval of the new antiquity law of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (June 2014). The new Law on Antiquities, Museums and Urban Heritage gives the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage the power to manage the rich heritage of the country and notably to deal with immovable Antiquities.

The not overstating the relevance of the new legislation for the preservation of ancient Rock arts, inscriptions and petroglyphs in Saudi Arabia, as this Law — that replaces the earlier 1972 Law of Antiquities — includes for the first time a specific section dealing found artefacts and rock arts. The new Saudi legislation aims at protecting the country’s antiquities and heritage as well as to give the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH) the mandate to ensure its preservation. The reform in this law enlarges the scope of the SCTH, now officially in charge of antiquities both immovable and movable that are a part of National Heritage of the Kingdom.

a. Buffer Zone Extension

Requests the state party to clarify whether there are any impediments to formalizing an extended buffer zone of 1 to 1.5 kilometres, as originally recommended by the committee.

As mentioned in the integrity of the serial property “The serial approach is justified for this property, and together, the components of the Rock Art of the Hail Region contain all the attributes necessary to express the Outstanding Universal Value. The boundaries of the components of the property are appropriate, and buffer zones have been established, the buffer zone of JABAL UMM SINMAN is to be extended 1.0 to 1.5 km to the west and south to adequately protect the visual setting and views”.

The extension of the proposed buffer zone in the Nomination and the providing additional margins for safety in the field have been the first priorities of the State Party as mentioned in the response to Decision 39 COM 8B.11.

Since Nomination, a modified buffer zone for JABAL UMM SINMAN component from 100 meters to 150 meters has been implemented and provided in the state party response to the decision 39 COM 8B.11 (a map showing the current expansion of the buffer zone and the extension of the protection fence are included in the Annex document). The recommended further extension of 1.0 to 1.5 kilometres towards the west and the south is already protected by the natural topography of the area, as it is completely covered with high sand dunes, making the area is inapplicable for any type of modern development that would threaten the visual integrity of the property.
According to the recommendations, a close coordination mechanism is established between the SCTH Branch in Hail Region and the local branch Municipalities of JUBBAH and SHUWAYMIS in addition to Hail Central Municipality (AMANA). The mechanisms presented in the submitted Factual Errors Report are now active; furthermore, new proposed extension is established using concrete markers. The new mechanisms aims at preserving the maximum possible amount of originality of the site — thus maintaining site “authenticity” — and at reducing the risk that people might construct new facilities without respecting the original layout and footprint.

The enforcement of the expansion of the buffer zone recommended by ICOMOS and the strengthening site monitoring team on the field have been the first priorities of the State Party. Detailing that proposed by WHC, a supported established coordination between the SCTH Branch in Hail and Branch municipalities of JUBBAH and SHUWAYMIS in addition to Hail central Municipality (AMANA). The mechanisms aims at better supervision of the core nominated area and its buffer zone and observing any infringement on the site that may lead to losing its OUV.

2. Management Plan, Masking, Visitor Infrastructure and Monitoring

Also Requests the State Party to specifically consider the management plan for the property the success of the masking work, the visitor infrastructure work, and the proposed monitoring.

a. Management Plan
Decision 39 COM 8B.11 clearly requested “Develop a tourism management strategy including an interpretation strategy that will address the increase in visitation numbers as part of the management plan”. Since 2015 the tourism management strategy submitted with the nomination file included an interpretation strategy and SCTH added to be in the implementation phase, as provided to the ICOMOS in the Factual Error Report in 2015.

The presentation of the site and of its Outstanding Universal Value to the visitors and to the residents of Hail counts among the priorities of the SCTH and of the Central Municipality of Hail (Amana).

A booklet on the Rock Art in the Hail Region of Saudi Arabia and the inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List has been prepared by the SCTH in 2017 and will be available to visitors from the new Hail Regional Museum. While new information panels, presenting the site and historic Jubbah, are being designed and will be positioned after the on-site works are complete.

Proposed method to erect elevated pathways in the site using non-permanent structures

The tender procedures followed by SCTH, which only allowed for the least price to be selected, unfortunately have been one of the major obstacles faced by SCTH branch in Hail, as the tendering process is administered from the Central SCTH headquarters in Riyadh. The bidding rules permits a somehow balanced analysis of the bids. The new mechanism for the allocation of contracts notably foresees that: 40% of the points given for experience on similar projects; 20% of the points given for CV qualifications; 40% of the points given for the pricing.

The implementation of the Site interpretation of Jabal Um Sinman in Jubbah is progressing under the direction of the SCTH Riyadh, on April 11, 2018 the contract was awarded to Bawani Al-Umrani Contracting for constructing visitor paths under the direction of the World Heritage Unit. The new paths will allow on foot visits, and working drawings are being gradually submitted to SCTH for review. The paths and the vehicular circuits within the Jabal Um Sinman Component are not yet completed, and the site is still a “work in progress”
environment. The main access to the site is being upgraded. Another major improvement of the situation in Jabal Um Sinman Component achieved by the reduction of car traffic inside the site. Since the submission of the File, a larger scheme foresees the creation of one-way dirt roads and the closure other accesses.

Work in Progress at the site

Besides, SCTH is supporting the publication of a scientific book focusing on Rock arts in the region written by a Dr. Majid Khan. This new publication, to be printed in 2019, will constitute both a welcome addition to the scientific literature about the site and an important tool to increase visitors' and residents' awareness about Hail's history and heritage.
The very aim of the conservation and revitalization plans implemented in Jabal Um Sinman component is the preservation of its unique and extraordinary heritage within a comprehensive strategy for site qualification. Achieving a balance between preservation and interpretation is an essential, and sensitive, element of the plan. The mechanisms of control designed in the framework of the Nomination and the provisions of best practice guarantee the respect of the natural setting of the site and the compatibility of the new project with the authenticity of the property.

The new Antiquity Law and Urban Regulation provide the legal framework and define the criteria for a sustainable and sensitive revitalization of the property capable to preserve its authenticity. SCTH World Heritage Unit oversees the review and approval of all interpretation and visitor projects. The technical team, jointly with the branch Municipality, supported by the local community supervises on-site works to guarantee that all new initiatives respect the authenticity of the site. The first field results are positive steps in this direction. The quality of the work will certainly improve in the coming years with the progressive upgrading of the technical skills of all concerned actors.

b. Masking Tasks

In SCTH response to Decision 39 COM 8B.11 that requested “frame and mask the rain water diversionary dam or water barrier near JUBBAH with typical low desert vegetation in view of the necessity of the structure and the substantial investment already made in its construction”. The very aim of the implemented conservation and revitalization plans the
Rock Art in the Hail Region of Saudi Arabia is the preservation of its unique and extraordinary heritage within a comprehensive strategy for the requalification of the site. The masking process completed in 2015; with the positive efforts made by JUBBAH Branch Municipality in coordination with the Hail Central Municipality (AMANA); thus, the growth of the vegetation will take its natural process as highlighted in the Factual Error Report submitted to UNESCO.

In compliance with article 172 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, that speculates the need for transparency and prior notification to the WHC in case of events. It was unfortunate in the past year (2017), this task was compromised due neglect and tampering that led to the destruction of these efforts, SCTH would like to assure the WHC is now in close communication with the JUBBAH branch Municipality to replant and mask the rain water diversionary.
c. Proposed Monitoring

At the moment of inscription, ICOMOS pointed out the importance of a thorough monitoring structures to be included in the property in order to plan its safeguard and revitalization. Accordingly, since the inscription, the monitoring structure and efforts have been pursued. In SCTH response to Decision 39 COM 8B.11 that requested “Developing monitoring indicators for impacts of development and tourism on the attributes of the nominated serial property”. After inscribing the Rock Art in the Hail Region of Saudi Arabia, ICOMOS pointed out the importance of developing a monitoring indicator for impact of development and tourism on the nominated serial property attributes in order to plan its safeguard and development.

It was mentioned in the Factual Error Report that a monitoring system is already developed. Furthermore, all required equipment mentioned in the protocol are purchased and installed on-sites since 2015. Accordingly, a technical methodology developed with International Federation of Rock Art Organizations (IFRAO) for monitoring rock arts are pursued. Notably, the following protocols:

1. Microscopic Monitoring, (200 microns) for patina and colour using portable x-ray fluorescence equipment;
2. Macroscopic Monitoring, monitoring the rock surfaces at the sites.

Work is underway to train site guards and specialist employees on the use of such equipment.
4. Next steps

Notwithstanding the positive results already achieved on-site, there are still areas where better management and coordination is needed. The following issues will notably be tackled in the coming months:

1. The coordination with the JUBBAH branch municipality for the re-masking of the diversionary near JABAL UM SANMAN Component, and re-baseline all tasks for better management this shall be done in the framework mutual coordination between SCTH and the Central Municipality of Hail.
2. The Interpretation plans for sites are realized as a priority for the preservation of the authenticity and OUV of the property.
3. Train Guards and specialists on monitoring and use of specialized equipment and methods of reporting progress.
4. Cleaning campaigns in the Property Components, in collaboration with Hail Central Municipality and branch Municipalities of JUBBAH and SHUWAYMIS.
5. Installation of site suitable lighting, signage and facilities, not to obstruct the view to and from the sites.
6. Ongoing awareness programs on antiquities and rock arts in particular to combat vandalism and graffiti.
7. Increasing site Safety and Security for both the visitors and the site.
Cleaning debris and banning the disposal of building waste is needed

Masking the Water Channelling is currently abandoned
5. Conclusion

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is fully aware of the complexity of this task and of the efforts still needed and is actively pursuing the goals set in the Nomination File and proud to renew in front of the international community its full commitment for the preservation of its cultural heritage.

An ambitious and long-term plan realized, and the first seeds planted with the nomination of this property are now beginning to yield its fruits. The attention of the World Heritage Centre and of the Advisory Bodies is a major incentive for the Kingdom.

Based on the results achieved, the State Party has implemented the recommendations for the sites of Jabal Umm Sinman in Jubbah, Jabal Al-Manjor & Jabal Rata in Shuwaymis set by the decision of the World Heritage Committee. In addition, appreciates the awareness by the World Heritage Centre of the efforts paid in these sites.
Annex: List of references
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