

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 ДОСТОПРИМЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

Our Ref.GB/AA/1585/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 20 December 2019

H. E. Mr Ahmad Jalali
Permanent Delegation of the Islamic Republic of
Iran to UNESCO
1, rue Miollis
75732 PARIS Cedex 15

World Heritage List 2020

Trans-Iranian Railway (Iran (Islamic Republic of)) – Interim report and additional information request

Dear Ambassador,

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 2020. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation process.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to “Trans-Iranian Railway” was carried out by Anton Häfliger (Switzerland) and Günter Dinhobl (Austria) in September - October 2019. The mission experts highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organization and implementation of the mission.

On 21 September 2019, a letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding the integrity and authenticity, factors affecting the property, boundaries, conservation, protection and management, interpretation, presentation and visitors’ management. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 28 October 2019 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

In mid-November 2019, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2020. 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 2020.

We thank you for the availability of your Delegation to the meeting held on Thursday 21 November 2019 with representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. The exchange during this meeting was of great help for the third part of the ICOMOS evaluation meeting.

While the ICOMOS Panel considered that the “Trans-Iranian Railway” might have the potential to meet the requirements for Outstanding Universal Value, this has not yet been demonstrated.

Therefore, we would be pleased if the State Party could consider the following points:

Documentation and inventory

ICOMOS appreciates the quality of the information provided in the nomination dossier on the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway. However, the information related to the inventory, documentation, detailed information and analysis on the cultural heritage aspects of the railways such as the architecture and state of conservation of the railway stations, workshops and other buildings as well as machines, tools and rolling stock is not presented in details. ICOMOS would be pleased if the State Party could provide a copy of the

existing records, with a summary in English. Related to these elements, detailing their location, state of conservation and if they are still in use or not, (as mentioned during the November meeting) would be helpful.

ICOMOS noted that part of the significance of the property could be found in the engineering system that allowed the construction of this railway across the country through different and sometimes difficult environmental and natural conditions. However, the nomination dossier does not provide sufficient information, records nor analysis on the cultural and natural aspects of the eight zones along the route, on how these aspects influenced the design of the Trans-Iranian Railway and how the Trans-Iranian Railway, once in operation, influenced the economies and societies of the 8 zones crossed. ICOMOS would be interested to receive further information on this matter.

Comparative analysis

ICOMOS appreciates the effort made to produce a comparative analysis on three levels of comparison: with domestic Railways, East Asia Railways and Mountain railways. However, ICOMOS considers that the third level of comparison is too limited as only some sections of the Trans-Iranian Railway are comparable to the characteristics of a Mountain Railway. The worldwide comparative analysis should therefore be extended also to other important railways in different continents (such as the Trans-Siberian Railway, etc.). ICOMOS also considers that the methodology used to carry out comparative analysis is based on a quantitative approach that does not seem the most appropriate to represent the complexity of meaning of the History and Attributes of the property. ICOMOS therefore encourages the State Party to do more in-depth analysis in this sense and thus to provide a more discursive argumentation of the historical, cultural and symbolic factors on which the comparison takes place.

ICOMOS also encourages also the State Party to use the ICOMOS thematic paper "Railways as World Heritage Sites" (1999) that could be of help to refine the comparative analysis selection. This would also be a good basis for a better justification of the chosen World Heritage criteria.

Justification for inscription

In relation to the proposed justification for criterion (ii), the nomination dossier claims that the involvement of 43 construction contractors from many countries in the execution of the Trans-Iranian Railway "*led to the improvement of the technical ... in other parts of the world, as the experts and engineers of the said countries benefitted from the new technical advancements and experiences gained and later exported these technical know-how and innovations to other parts of the world*". ICOMOS invites the State Party to provide specific examples of these advancements from the Trans-Iranian Railway that were adopted by the larger international engineering community.

In relation to the proposed justification for criterion (iv), the nomination dossier claims that the Trans-Iranian Railway construction "*led to the improvement of the technical knowledge in building bridges*". ICOMOS would be very grateful if the State Party could provide more detailed documentation on these new technical knowledge developments and specify whether this improvement has been achieved in terms of adaptation of traditional methods in a new challenging context, or in terms of technical innovations.

Moreover, ICOMOS would appreciate receiving further explanations as regards the originality of the "*new style emerging from the mixture of the Iranian and western architecture*", as the development of a new eclectic style produced by the merging between indigenous and western architecture is not so unusual.

Conservation and management

ICOMOS recognizes that the Trans-Iranian Railway is a centrally managed single property as an operational railway line. However, the management of a cultural heritage resource of this size as a single entity is a difficult and challenging task. In this sense, ICOMOS considers that the inventory mentioned above of the many cultural heritage elements and aspects, and particularly those that are not in use anymore, represents an essential tool for the management of the property as a whole.

In terms of management and decision making process, ICOMOS would be pleased if the State Party could provide further information regarding the prerogatives of the Trans-Iranian Railway Office, as its role and actions are essential for the conservation of the property. In this regard, ICOMOS considers necessary that the State Party establishes a conservation management plan, for the railway itself, but also for the historical

features associated to the railway. Due to the fact that the railway is still active, the conservation management plan appears to be an essential tool to guarantee the conditions of authenticity and integrity of the property, and associated features.

We look forward to your responses to these points, which will be of great help in our evaluation process.

We would be grateful if you could provide **ICOMOS** and the **World Heritage Centre** with the above information **by 28 February 2020 at the latest**, the deadline set out in paragraph 148 of the *Operational Guidelines* for supplementary information on nominations to be received. Please note that any information submitted after this date will not be considered by ICOMOS in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee. It should be noted, however, that while ICOMOS will carefully consider any supplementary information submitted, it cannot properly evaluate a completely revised nomination or large amounts of new information submitted at the last minute. So, we would be grateful if the State Party could keep its response concise and respond only to the above requests.

We thank you for your support of the World Heritage Convention and the evaluation process.

Yours faithfully,



Gwenaëlle Bourdin
Director
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to Deputy for Cultural Heritage and Responsible for Conservation, Revitalization and Inscription of Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHHTO)
UNESCO World Heritage Centre