Third State of Conservation Report Addressed by
the Republic of Iraq
to the World Heritage Committee on

The Ahwar of Southern Iraq:
Refuge of Biodiversity and Relict Landscape of the
Mesopotamian Cities

World Heritage Property n. 1481

November 2020
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1- REQUESTS BY THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

This report addresses the following requests expressed by World Heritage Committee in its Decision 43 COM 7B.35 (paragraphs 119 – 120), namely:

3. Welcomes the start of conservation work by international archaeological missions at the three cultural components of the property, Ur, Tell Eridu and Uruk, and, the comprehensive survey undertaken at Tell Eridu;

4. Regrets that no progress has been reported on the development of site-specific conservation plans for the three cultural components of the property, as requested by the Committee in response to the significant threats they face related to instability, significant weathering, inappropriate previous interventions, and the lack of continuous maintenance;

5. Urges the State Party to extend the comprehensive survey and mapping to all three cultural components of the property, as baseline data for future work, and to develop operational conservation plans for each as a matter of priority, and to submit these to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;

6. Appreciates that a study to establish the minimum water flow needed for the natural components of the property has been undertaken, but notes with deep concern that this minimum flow has not been met in the past two years, and reiterates its request to the State Party to provide the natural components of the property with adequate water within its national capacity as a matter of utmost priority;

7. Strongly encourages again the States Parties of Iraq, Iran and Turkey to continue their efforts in cooperating towards long-term sustainable water management, so as to ensure the provision of adequate amounts of water for the natural components of the property to sustain their contribution to its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);

8. While appreciating that the State Party considers that World Heritage designation provides adequate legal protection to the property, also reiterates its request to the State Party to complete the designation of all of the natural components of the property as protected areas in order to provide effective protection under national legislative and management systems, as required in the Operational Guidelines,

9. Reiterating its previous significant concern over the continued vulnerability of the natural components of the property to oil and gas developments, recalls the Committee’s established position that oil and gas exploration and exploitation are incompatible with World Heritage status, and strongly urges again the State Party to make a permanent commitment to not explore or exploit oil and gas within the property, and to ensure that any such activities outside the property do not cause a negative impact on its OUV;
10. Requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre data concerning illegal bird hunting, overfishing, including the number of prosecutions and convictions from these illegal activities, and to further strengthen its legal protection, enforcement and management capacity to control these activities;

11. Also urges the State Party to prepare an updated Integrated Management Plan for the entire property, and to promote the development of updated Management Plans for each of the components of the property;

12. Also welcomes the measures taken to ensure tourism activities do not damage the property, and further reiterates its request to the State Party to develop and implement an overall tourism plan for the whole property, to regulate visitation, and to ensure visitor safety, and sustainable and adequate tourism practices, infrastructure and facilities;

13. Also requests the State Party to continue to meaningfully engage with the local communities on matters concerning water usage, rights-based approaches to management and for the application of traditional ecological knowledge to any planned new constructions;

14. Also regrets that the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property could not be undertaken yet, and reiterates furthermore its request that the mission takes place as soon as possible;

15. Reminds the State Party about the need to submit to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies, information on any future plans for major restoration or new construction projects that may affect the OUV of the property, in line with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse;
2- CULTURAL HERITAGE

3. Welcomes the start of conservation work by international archaeological missions at the three cultural components of the property, Ur, Tell Eridu and Uruk, and, the comprehensive survey undertaken at Tell Eridu;

The Iraqi government seeks to achieve partnership with specialized universities, organizations and archeology missions around the world in the field of antiquities conservation, because of the high cultural value it represents for the country, the Higher Committee for the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Ahwar of Southern Iraq as a World Heritage Property expresses its thanks for this welcoming, it confirms Iraq’s commitment to complete the maintenance procedures for the cultural components of the property, as the National Committee looks forward to starting excavation and maintenance of the Eridu site in the earliest time, especially after the completion of the survey work by the Italian Sapienza University mission in Rome.

4. Regrets that no progress has been reported on the development of site-specific conservation plans for the three cultural components of the property, as requested by the Committee in response to the significant threats they face related to instability, significant weathering, inappropriate previous interventions, and the lack of continuous maintenance;

The unstable conditions that Iraq was passing through from 2019 until now have hampered the arrival and regularity of the work of the archaeological missions of the three cultural components as well as the completion of maintenance and surveys. However, their attendance was limited to short and intermittent times and further, a notable progress has been made in some work related to exploration and maintenance in the three sites:

1) Ur site: a cooperation contract was concluded with the Italian organization Orem Organization (UPP organization Iraq) to enhance the protection and sustainable management of Iraqi archaeological sites in accordance with relevant laws, regulations and instructions by providing the necessary human and material resources by the organization to achieve Objectives of the agreement. It was agreed to establish a guidance center for visitors (while ensuring the maintenance of the high exceptional value of the component). This is a step towards maintenance and redevelopment of the archaeological site through facilitating maintenance and restoration activities, enhancing interest in academic research, and improving services for tourists. A wooden corridor with iron bases has also been implemented, linking the paved road to the Lal Mach Temple, passing through the amphitheater tower (Al-Zaqqura) with a distance of 275 meters to support the tourist activity while preserving the archaeological value of the site.

2) Eridu site: In the intention to establish facilities for the infrastructure of the site for the purpose of starting exploration and maintenance works, especially after the completion of the survey work by the Italian University of Sapienza in Rome, but as a result of the country’s current
conditions, excavation work has not yet been started but efforts are continuing to resume work during this year.

3) Uruk site: The maintenance work was carried out for the lower part of the northern corner of the ziggurat under the supervision of the German mission represented by the maintenance expert Professor Christophe Ziegert and engineer Andreas Hofshield, and the course of the rain stream was diverted from the body of the ziggurat. In addition to starting to put in place the required treatments for problems of damage and fragmentation in the Ziggurat (Anu) (White Temple) and the stone building. The four types of geophysical survey, geomatics, Drones and archeology of the site that are carried out by the German mission have been initiated since 2015 and they are still continuing. However, the work has not being accomplished yet due to country’s current situation.

5. **Urges the State Party to extend the comprehensive survey and mapping to all three cultural components of the property, as baseline data for future work, and to develop operational conservation plans for each as a matter of priority, and to submit these to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;**

Work is underway to carry out surveys of the three cultural components, as survey work has been carried out at Aredo site by the Italian university of Sapienza. Moreover, the survey work at Al-Warka site still in progress in coordination and supervision of the German mission. Nevertheless, the country’s circumstances led to an irregular visits of the mission to Iraq and prevented the completion of the work (Iraq hopes to complete it during the coming period). As for Ur site, work was previously started by the American archaeological mission from Stony Brook University in New York, currently, more excavations works are currently being planned at the site. Here we would like to emphasize that Iraq is keen to complete the work of comprehensive survey of the three cultural components for the purpose of setting operational conservation plans and submit them for review by advisory committees. The improvement of country’s situation will contribute in accomplishment of survey works during the coming period.

### 3- NATURAL HERITAGE

6. **Appreciates that a study to establish the minimum water flow needed for the natural components of the property has been undertaken, but notes with deep concern that this minimum flow has not been met in the past two years, and reiterates its request to the State Party to provide the natural components of the property with adequate water within its national capacity as a matter of utmost priority;**

During the previous years, especially 2017-2018, the Ahwar suffered from scarce in incoming water quantities due to climate change effects, cutting off water resources from the eastern borders, and the decrement in water allocations from the upstream. From the period
November 2018 until the end of May 2019, the Ahwar were exposed to a flood season on Tigris river, in addition to the occurrence of high floods from the eastern borders. The region also has exposed to heavy rains that greatly increase water inflows to the Ahwar. At the end of 2019, the amount of water reached 12.3 BCM with an increment of 112% (above the specified water amounts allocated to the marshes in the strategic study (5.8 BCM)). This has positively influences the environment of the Ahwar besides the socio-economic aspects. That was noticed by the return of water buffalo breeders who had been displaced before during the previous periods in addition to the flourishing of bio diversity and a noticeable increase in the vegetation cover (Maps No. A1, A2, B1, B2) within the Core boundary. The vegetation cover area reached 142 km\(^2\) in 2018 and reached 613 km\(^2\) in 2019, i.e. an increase of 331\%. Moreover, the region has witnessed reappearance of specific type of water plants (water lily plant as an example), these types were vanished for more than 15 years ago. An increase in fish stock has also been notified which in turn led to an increase in the standards of living for Arab Ahwar.

The return of Water lily plant after 15 years of absence


The return of Water lily plant after 15 years of absence

(https://www.nasiriaelc.com/2019/05/162657)
7. Strongly encourages again the States Parties of Iraq, Iran and Turkey to continue their efforts in cooperating towards long-term sustainable water management, so as to ensure the provision of adequate amounts of water for the natural components of the property to sustain their contribution to its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);

The Iraqi government continues meetings and dialogues with neighboring countries on special issues in the field of water and joint technical cooperation for the purpose of reaching solutions regarding water sharing and the most important measures taken:

1. Measures made with the Turkish side:
   - The meetings of the 18th session of the Iraqi-Turkish Joint Economic Committee were held for the period 3-4/5/2018 in Ankara to insure continue discussions between the Iraqi Ministry of Water Resources and the Turkish Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs to reach a time schedule for a long-term agreement between the two sides to secure the required water allocations for Iraq in which through, the required water amounts for marshlands sustainability will be insured.
   - In light of the visit of H.E. the Minister of Water Resources, Dr. Gamal Abbas Al-Adili to Turkey with a delegation accompanying the President of the Iraqi Republic, H.E. Dr. Barham Salih, that took place in January 2019, the water portfolio was discussed on top of the topics in the visit agenda with the Turkish side. During a second visit to Turkey for a high level delegation presented by H.E. the Prime Minister Dr. Adel Abdulmahdi in May 2019, H.E. the Iraqi Minster of Water Resources has delivered a draft of a legal agreement to the Turkish side includes the required shares of water to Iraq from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. A national team was formed in coordination with the concerned authorities to reach out a comprehensive agreement to determine the required water allocations.
   - The team held a meeting in Baghdad on 31/7/2019 with the Turkish side, which was chaired by the advisor of the President of the Turkish Republic for Water Affairs, and his team included experts and specialists from the ministries of agriculture, forestry, foreign affairs, environment, electricity, housing and trade. Regarding water issues, the Iraqi side presented a draft agreement that included the Iraqi shares of the water of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (which has already been delivered to them). The Turkish side showed its interest in the topic of water sharing and asked to define the needs and promised to study the draft agreement and taking the final decision in order to sign it.
   - Based on what was agreed upon between the two sides in Baghdad meeting above, technical teams were formed regarding; a study of the upper Zab river, a study of a proposal to establish a joint Iraqi research center for water, and a team for the projects and dams that Turkey has proposed to contribute in their implementation. The first Iraqi technical team visited Turkey in 9/9/2019 but the Turkish side was not prepared to pursue any serious negotiations or technical meetings.
2. Actions taken with the Iranian side:
   - A meeting in Tehran was been held in 6/4/2019 between the Iraqi Minister of Water Resources and the Iranian Minister of Energy were various topics were discussed, including the importance of deepening the relationships between the two countries and common water issues, including the file of sharing water of the common rivers, and the agreement to form technical teams. A proposed meeting for discussing the specified issues was arranged by the Iraqi side and it formally informed the Iranian side to confirm the meeting. However, the Iranian side has not confirmed the meeting yet.
   - A request was submitted by the Ministry of Water Resources to the Iranian side for the purpose of activating the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2012 to discuss common river issues, water scarcity, and to study the Iranian drainage water flowing towards Iraq. However, nothing has accomplished yet.

3. Other issues:
   - Iraq requested the concerned international parties to activate the United Nations Convention on the Law of Using International Watercourses for Non-Navigational Purposes of 1997 to which Iraq has joined in 2001 and entered into force in 2014 to enhance cooperation between the countries organizing the agreement under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly.
   - Iraq is now in the final process of joining the Water Convention, Helsinki 1992, for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, to be ratified by the Iraqi parliament.
   - The Ministry of Water Resources has participated in a number of meetings and water forums regarding water and international water issues.
8. While appreciating that the State Party considers that World Heritage designation provides adequate legal protection to the property, also reiterates its request to the State Party to complete the designation of all of the natural components of the property as protected areas in order to provide effective protection under national legislative and management systems, as required in the Operational Guidelines.

The inclusion of the natural components of the property within the World Heritage Convention provides legal protection for them as protected areas within the national framework. In addition, these components are listed in Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The Iraqi in force laws protect the property to enable the executive bodies to take legal actions against violators, the work is in progress through the Higher Committee for the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Ahwar of Southern Iraq as a World Heritage to make modifications to the Wildlife Protection Law and present it to the parliament for to insure a wider protection for the property.

9. Reiterating its previous significant concern over the continued vulnerability of the natural components of the property to oil and gas developments, recalls the Committee’s established position that oil and gas exploration and exploitation are incompatible with World Heritage status, and strongly urges again the State Party to make a permanent commitment to not explore or exploit oil and gas within the property, and to ensure that any such activities outside the property do not cause a negative impact on its OUV;

As a result of the exposure of the Ahwar to a wave of torrents, which caused an increase in the heavily submerged area, the oil activities have been limited. This led to a discontinuation of exploration work in those areas at the present time (in the vicinity of the property). Basra Petroleum Company continuously obligates the companies investing in licensing rounds to adhere to the environmental impact studies of the adjacent areas to the marshlands, noting that the current instructions in force by the Ministry of Oil are in line with environmental regulations to preserve the marshes and wetlands. These companies support the infrastructure and local communities in those areas by restoring or establishing some schools, hospitals, community centers, and youth centers. Companies also support rehabilitation of roads for the purpose of promoting the settlement and provide jobs alternatives to reduce the pressure on the Ahwar's areas. Also, we refer to the continuous work of the "Committee for Ensuring Good and Implementing the Ecological System of the Marshlands Property" Formed by Higher Committee for the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Ahwar of Southern Iraq as a World Heritage Property.
10. Requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre data concerning illegal bird hunting, overfishing, including the number of prosecutions and convictions from these illegal activities, and to further strengthen its legal protection, enforcement and management capacity to control these activities;

Government agencies continue its relentless pursuit to reduce overfishing. Great efforts are being made to monitor fishing activities and raise environmental awareness of fishers (in particular) and the local population (in general) about the risks of these practices on biodiversity in the region (as these practices classified as one of the most pressing practices on biological diversity of all kinds). As a result of these efforts, overfishing activities have largely reduced. However, during the last period, a number of cases were recorded, and necessary measures were taken about them, through the listed actions:

a) Coordination with the Environmental Police Department in Maysan Governorate in 27/5/2019 about what social media reported about a practices attributed to the Border Police in the area of AL-SHEEB and AL-TEB by killing a group of hyenas, which are considered endangered species, and continue to urge the environmental police to take the necessary measures in this regard.

b) Carrying out continuous patrols with the aim of monitoring and preventing overfishing of fish in Al-Musehab, Al-Salal and Al-Sebees / Madinah district, because of use inequitable fishing methods for large and small fish in the breeding season and convert them into animal feed.

c) Coordination with the Basra Operations Command in 3/11/2019 regarding some persons using the Agricultural shadow lattice for fishing after making small openings in the area of Al-Sebis / Al-Madinah district and fixing this clamp to lattice to catch the largest number of fish.
d) Coordination with the environmental police to conduct campaigns against overfishing for users of small nets.

e) A number of traffickers of water birds in Dhi Qar were referred to AL-FOHOD court.

f) A sub-committee have been formed emanating from the Higher Committee for the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Ahwar of Southern Iraq as a World Heritage Property for the review of laws and legislation in force related to overfishing.

g) Ongoing Follow-up with the environmental police to emphasize the necessity of activating and implementing the provisions of hunting regulation in the marsh areas No. (2) of 2017 of Protection and Enhancement of Environment Law No. (27) for the year 2009 which specified ways of hunting birds and fish and the periods during which hunting is prohibited and the species that are not allowed to be caught (Threatened with extinction, close to the extinction, with aesthetic and local importance) and the numbers allowed to hunt for each person, in addition to other laws in force on the subject.

h) Seek to create the Marsh Protection Department and the Environmental Police Center in the governorates of Maysan and Dhi Qar.

**4- INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PLAN**

11. Also urges the State Party to prepare an updated Integrated Management Plan for the entire property, and to promote the development of updated Management Plans for each of the components of the property;

Work is in progress through the Higher Committee for the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Ahwar of Southern Iraq as a World Heritage Property to collect the required data to update an integrated management plan for the property. The conditions that Iraq is currently passing through 2019 till now have hindered work progress in completing the update of the management plan and delaying its completion within the specified time. Its commitment to develop and update the property management plan during the next short period and to circulate the updated paragraphs on the special management plans for each component of the property.
5- TOURISM PLAN

12. Also welcomes the measures taken to ensure tourism activities do not damage the property, and further reiterates its request to the State Party to develop and implement an overall tourism plan for the whole property, to regulate visitation, and to ensure visitor safety, and sustainable and adequate tourism practices, infrastructure and facilities;

The Higher Committee for the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Ahwar of Southern Iraq as a World Heritage Property is working through its representatives from the ministries and relevant authorities to organize and follow up tourism activities in the areas of the property components, whether cultural or natural. The Local Administrations of the Administrative Units in those areas have been instructed not to issue approvals for the implementation of projects of a tourist nature until obtaining the approval of the Higher National Committee. A number of small projects of a tourist nature were established within the natural components of The Ahwar of Southern Iraq property under the supervision and implementation of the commission in the Hawizeh and Central Marshes that contribute to the development of tourism activity in the area and within the determinants that include the use of environmentally friendly building materials that simulate the cultural character of the marshes. Currently, a contracting agreement has been prepared with Orem to establish a Visitor Guidance Center within the global requirements, so that it does not affect the exceptional value of the site. A project for preparing and implementing a comprehensive tourism management plan for the property was included in the works that will be implemented for the year 2020 to provide the financial allocations necessary for its completion.

6- ENGAGING LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN MATTERS RELATED TO WATER USE

13. Also requests the State Party to continue to meaningfully engage with the local communities on matters concerning water usage, rights-based approaches to management and for the application of traditional ecological knowledge to any planned new constructions;

In 2014, Water Users’ Associations was established, in the middle of 2018 its reached 140 societies distributed in various regions of Iraq to give the direct stakeholders of water users represented by farmers a role in the organization, operation and management of water resources. The project was implemented in cooperation with the JICA which worked and is still working to provide assistance to the agricultural and irrigation sectors to achieve appropriate water management by beneficiaries through a participatory irrigation development plan to improve water management, as it was implemented through these associations:

- Formulating a plan that reflects decision-making by the Water Users Association
- The Water User Association implemented the plan through field water management practices.
Based on the achieved result, the plan will be modified periodically, which will reflect on a more equitable distribution of water and rationalization of consumption in agricultural areas, which will be reflected in providing water suitable for the biological diversity in the marshes.

The local communities have been seriously involved in the rights of managing the Ahwar of Southern Iraq property through their effective contributions in proposing and implementing projects that serve the property and also in reducing the risks experienced by the natural components and adapting to the developments, especially in the dry and flood seasons, knowing that the representatives of the local population in the committee continue to attend periodic meetings and contribute to the work of the sub-committees formed by the Higher National Committee.

Water users’ associations meeting

7- WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE/ICOMOS/IUCN REACTIVE MONITORING MISSION TO THE PROPERTY

14. Also regrets that the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property could not be undertaken yet, and reiterates furthermore its request that the mission takes place as soon as possible;

The mission of the National Committee for Education, Culture and Science (UNESCO), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and (ICOMOS) apologized from visiting the marshes areas that were scheduled on 25/10/2019, according to the email sent to us on 21/10/2019, due to urgent obligations. The Higher Committee for the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Ahwar of Southern Iraq as a World Heritage Property expresses its full readiness to complete the visit on the date specified by the National Commission for Education, Culture and Science (UNESCO).

8- PLANED CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

15. Reminds the State Party about the need to submit to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies, information on any future plans for major restoration or new
construction projects that may affect the OUV of the property, in line with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse;

Projects are proposed to be carried out inside the property by the Higher Committee for the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Ahwar of Southern Iraq as a World Heritage Property. Noting that these projects in line with environmental regulations to preserve the marshes and wetlands. Its also support the infrastructure of local communities in those areas:

1) Modern villages project
2) Rest locations for delegations, tourists and visitors
3) Waste and water jungles recycling.
4) The Garden of Aden.
5) Sustainability of handicrafts and establish marketing stores for them
6) Update the management plan data.
7) Research stations
8) Geopark
9) Modernization of the Biodiversity Project, KBA
10) Assessment of pollution level and severity (treatment implementation).
11) Preparing plans for confronting risks and integrated management.
12) Tourist development for the property
13) Legal procedures and legislations for protection.

9- SURVEY THE BIRDS OF PREY COMING IN THE MARSHES

Eleven field trips were carried out to the central marshes for the period from February 2018 to April 2019. The purpose of the field survey was to determine the location and time distribution of the birds of prey, the density of the species is estimated between 0.0042 - 0.035 birds / hectare, approximately 7000 birds of prey coming to the marshes were recorded.
10. SIGNATURE OF THE CONCERNED AUTHORITY

20-1-2020

Dr. Jamal Abbas Mohsin Al-Adilee

Head of the Higher Committee for the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Ahwar of Southern Iraq as a World Heritage Property

Minister of Water Resources of the Republic of Iraq
Forth State of Conservation Report Addressed by the Republic of Iraq to the World Heritage Committee on

The Ahwar of Southern Iraq: Refuge of Biodiversity and Relict Landscape of the Mesopotamian Cities

World Heritage Property n. 1481

November 2021
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9- Appendices.
1- REQUESTS BY THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

This report addresses the following requests expressed by World Heritage Committee in its Decision 43 COM 7B.35 (paragraphs 119 – 120), namely:

3. Welcomes the start of conservation work by international archaeological missions at the three cultural components of the property, Ur, Tell Eridu and Uruk, and, the comprehensive survey undertaken at Tell Eridu;

4. Regrets that no progress has been reported on the development of site-specific conservation plans for the three cultural components of the property, as requested by the Committee in response to the significant threats they face related to instability, significant weathering, inappropriate previous interventions, and the lack of continuous maintenance;

5. Urges the State Party to extend the comprehensive survey and mapping to all three cultural components of the property, as baseline data for future work, and to develop operational conservation plans for each as a matter of priority, and to submit these to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;

6. Appreciates that a study to establish the minimum water flow needed for the natural components of the property has been undertaken, but notes with deep concern that this minimum flow has not been met in the past two years, and reiterates its request to the State Party to provide the natural components of the property with adequate water within its national capacity as a matter of utmost priority;

7. Strongly encourages again the States Parties of Iraq, Iran and Turkey to continue their efforts in cooperating towards long-term sustainable water management, so as to ensure the provision of adequate amounts of water for the natural components of the property to sustain their contribution to its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);

8. While appreciating that the State Party considers that World Heritage designation provides adequate legal protection to the property, also reiterates its request to the State Party to complete the designation of all of the natural components of the property as protected areas in order to provide effective protection under national legislative and management systems, as required in the Operational Guidelines,

9. Reiterating its previous significant concern over the continued vulnerability of the natural components of the property to oil and gas developments, recalls the Committee’s established position that oil and gas exploration and exploitation are
incompatible with World Heritage status, and strongly urges again the State Party to make a permanent commitment to not explore or exploit oil and gas within the property, and to ensure that any such activities outside the property do not cause a negative impact on its OUV;

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12. Also welcomes the measures taken to ensure tourism activities do not damage the property, and further reiterates its request to the State Party to develop and implement an overall tourism plan for the whole property, to regulate visitation, and to ensure visitor safety, and sustainable and adequate tourism practices, infrastructure and facilities;

13. Also requests the State Party to continue to meaningfully engage with the local communities on matters concerning water usage, rights-based approaches to management and for the application of traditional ecological knowledge to any planned new constructions;

14. Also regrets that the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property could not be undertaken yet, and reiterates furthermore its request that the mission takes place as soon as possible;

15. Reminds the State Party about the need to submit to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies, information on any future plans for major restoration or new construction projects that may affect the OUV of the property, in line with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse;
Second: Cultural Heritage

3- It welcomes the start of the maintenance work carried out by the international archaeological missions in the three cultural components of the property, Oro Eridu and Uruk, and the comprehensive survey that was conducted at the Eridu site.

Regarding all parts of the world to the Corona pandemic (Covid 19) since the end of 2019 until the present time, and its appearance in Iraq in the early 2020s, it has led to the closure of most institutions, including archaeological and tourist sites, as they were partially closed with the taking of preventive precautions against the disease by setting conditions of use Gags, sterilization and examination of visitors at the archaeological site. Therefore, there is no maintenance work on the cultural heritage sites of the marsh property.

4- It regrets that no progress has been done respecting development of site-specific conservation plans for the three cultural components of the property, at the request of the Committee in response to the major threats they face in relation to instability, major weather factors, inappropriate previous interventions, and the lack of progressive maintenance.

As a result of the Corona pandemic (Covid 19), it led to the cessation of maintenance and excavation work by foreign missions, except for the presence of some rehabilitation and conservation work at cultural components of the property of Ur and Eridu, which are as follows:

A-Procedures taken in Ur; the archeological city

1. BRC fencing surrounding the Lal Mach Temple and the (Al-Zaqqura).
2. The GCHA, in cooperation with the Um Ponte Per set up a plan to develop the Ur archaeological site and transform it into a sustainable archaeological site model in a scientific and thoughtful way through the transfer of all services to visitors, which include (checkpoint, parking of large and small wheels, The visitor center, the electric light wheel stand and its alternatives near the access point where the main road gate is, in order to protect the site and avoid any damage to the antique building). The visitor center, which is expected to be built in future stages, will act as a reception point for visitors and an information and management center that includes:
   • Sorting out a site devoted to the visitors' center building, which is part of a general plan to manage the site scientifically and in accordance with
international standards. The place is allocated after study and research and in cooperation with the site administration and Dhi Qar Governorate.

- Preparing roads, designing and rehabilitating a direct road to the airport, allows greater flow and shortens the road without passing through the Ur site, and allows the Ur site to add a visitor center and an external garage at the same time.
- Preparing a general garage floor for buses and public cars for visitors, guests and employees outside the borders of Ur city.
- Modifying and preparing a small garage floor for electric vehicles.
- Proposing design and detailed plans for the future visitor center building that takes into account the architectural identity and the nature of the site and not affecting the image of the place and the level of vision of Al-Zaqqura as an important symbol of the site.
- It includes the design of the new visitors' center, which will be implemented, several construction facilities, including a bus garage, bathrooms, laundries, and a cafeteria with a library to sell publications, as well as a visitor management center affiliated with the General Authority of Antiquities and Heritage with a protection center and a checkpoint for the National Police.

B- Procedures taken in the archeological city of Uruk:

1- The city of Uruk was partially closed to visitors due to the pandemic, which led to the suspension of the work of the German mission at the site.

2- Due to the deterioration of the structural condition of the stone building that dates back to the late Uruk era (the end of the fourth millennium BC), which is located in the lowest area in the ancient city of Uruk due to the rainwater that formed paths and streams with severe slopes that reach inside the building, which led They gathered in it and negatively affected the stability of the building and thus will lead to its collapse, and after consulting German experts to take emergency rescue measures to preserve this rare building, which has become difficult to accomplish by them at the present time, and after obtaining official approvals from the General Authority for Antiquities and Heritage from the lady (Margaret Van S) buried the stone building until the arrival of the German mission to the city of Uruk again, so the management of the Uruk archaeological team headed by Mr. (Ali Abid Shalgam) and under the supervision of German experts through the zoom platform to bury this building. As for the burial procedures, they are as follows, as shown in the picture (1) and Map (1):
• The burial procedures shall begin on 11/3/2020, as the building was documented before it was buried in accordance with the correct scientific frameworks followed in documenting archaeological sites and in agreement with the German side.

• Place Geocastel fabric to completely cover the walls and floors of the building, to form an insulating layer separating the floors, walls and corridors from the burial layer.

• Making a soil throw in order to carry out the filling procedures. The filling was made from the accumulations of earthen near the building, which were extracted from it during the excavations of the fifties and sixties of the last century.

• The filling was done starting with the outer side of the building, then the middle and then the inner hall, taking into account the placing of a quantity of dust in the middle and then internal corridors simultaneously with filling the outer corridor.

• The track of the vehicles was determined by safety straps in order to avoid the carriage from friction with the walls.

This burial experience is the first experience for the German side and the Iraqi side to temporarily preserve archaeological buildings and sites until maintenance work starts.

The stone building after the burial in the ancient city of Warkaa

The stone building after the burial in the ancient city of Warkaa
The ancient city of Ur

The stone building after the burial in the ancient city of Warkaa

The ancient city of Ur

The stone building after the burial Scheme in the ancient city of Warka
5- The State Urges the party to expand the scope of comprehensive surveying and mapping to include all three cultural components of the property, as basic data for future work, and to develop plans for operational preservation for each of them as a matter of priority, and submit them to the World Heritage Center for review by advisory bodies.

Because of the pandemic, all survey work in the cultural components of the marsh property has been halted. Despite the pandemic and the difficult economic conditions that the country is going through, the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities is keen to take all necessary measures to preserve and protect cultural property in general and the sites of the cultural marshes, especially through contracting with foreign missions, as well as Iraqi archaeological cadres.

C- Measures taken in the ancient city of Erido:

There are no measures taken in the archeological city of Erido due to the Corona pandemic (Covid 19)

Third: Natural Heritage:

6- Appreciates conducting a study to determine the minimum flow of water required for the natural components of the property, but notes with great concern that this minimum flow has not been achieved in the past two years, and reiterates its request to the State Party to provide the natural components of the property with adequate water within the limits of its national capacity as a top priority.

Iraq is still in the past with the necessary procedures and measures to maintain and maintain the natural components of the property, as these measures included the following, and as shown in the map (2):

- Cleaning works for rivers and maintenance of dams and regulators
- Works to improve water quality
- Providing an amount of (4.8) billion cubic meters for the year 2020 to supplement the natural components with the available quantities in them from the 2019 flood, which still has a continuous and positive impact on the environmental side of the natural components, which was reflected on the social and economic side of the Marsh Arabs.
- Continuous field monitoring of the natural components of the property as shown in Appendix No. (1) and continuous monitoring of vegetation cover, as the area of vegetation cover during the December within the boundaries of the buffer
zone reached 594 km² in 2019 and reached 736 km² in 2020, i.e. an increase of 23.9% as shown in Map (3)

maintenance projects to improve the water quality of the natural components of the marsh property

false color, 22\12\2019. USGS, sentinel 2.

NDVI, 22\12\2019. USGS, sentinel 2.
It strongly encourages the States Parties in Iraq, Iran and Turkey to resume their efforts in cooperation for the sustainable management of water in the long term, in order to ensure that sufficient quantities of water are provided to the natural components of the property to maintain their contribution to the outstanding global value.

The Iraqi government continues meetings and dialogues with neighboring countries on special issues in the field of water and joint technical cooperation in order to reach solutions regarding water sharing. Among the most important measures taken:

- Measures taken in the respect of the Turkish side
  a) The water relations between Iraq and Turkey witnessed a relatively development, especially when the Minister of Water Resources, Mahdi Rasheed Al-Hamdani, was named as the representative of the Iraqi Prime Minister to be a counterpart to the Special Envoy of the Turkish President for the water file, Mr. Faisal Oglu.
  b) The first round of joint bilateral technical meetings between the Iraqi and Turkish sides was held on 8-12-2020 via a closed-circuit television, where the Iraqi side was headed by the Minister of Water Resources with a number of specialists from the Ministry, experts, advisors from the Ministry of Foreign
Affairs and a representative of the Agriculture, Water and Marsh Committee in Parliament. The Turkish side was headed by Mr. Murad Dag Daviran, Deputy Head of the State Water Affairs Corporation in Turkey, with a number of specialists from the Turkish Ministries of Agriculture, Forestry and Foreign Affairs, and the two sides discussed areas of cooperation in:

- Invest and develop the common water resources of the Tigris and Euphrates.
- The plan to operate the Turkish Ilisu Dam on the Tigris River for the next and long-term period, in which the Turkish side pledged not to harm Iraq due to the operation of the dam, agreeing on a fixed share for the discharges released from the Ilisu Dam.
- The two sides discussed the issue of establishing a joint Iraqi-Turkish research center to be headquartered in Baghdad and a branch thereof in Basra in order to exchange information and experiences.
- The meeting considered a number of important projects proposed, the contribution of Turkish companies specialized in their implementation, the current water situation, the importance of exchanging technical and hydrological information and operating plans for projects within the two river basins, and activating the work of the monitoring and measuring stations team.

that the common agreement between the two sides on the protocol draft will positively effect on the release of water portions which guarantees The Ahwar of southern Iraq and sustain the natural resources there.

- The approval of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers obtained on 26/8/2020 the wording of the draft protocol prepared by the Ministry of Water Resources, which is proposed to be signed by the Turkish side on cooperation in managing water resources, including the proposed plan to operate the Ilisu dam.
- The Ministry of Water Resources informed the Turkish side of its concern through diplomatic channels on 24/8/2020 regarding the construction of the Al Jazeera dam, which relies on water released at the back of the Ilisu dam. The Turkish side did not provide Iraq with sufficient information about this dam, which may reduce the volume of water that passes to Iraq in the coming years, as well as the deterioration of its quality due to sanitation and agricultural waste. The Ministry of Water Resources confirmed the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 9/30/2020 according to the Prime Minister’s directive to record Iraq’s objection to the Turkish side’s reservation to provide Iraq with technical information related to the carrot dam and the irrigation
The construction of this dam will cause damage to Iraq's water share within the Tigris River, in terms of quantity and quality.

- The meeting of the Ministry of Water Resources with the Turkish ambassador in Baghdad in July and October of 2020 after the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry did not respond, during which the ministry clarified the water situation and future expectations of water scarcity and the inability to secure water for various needs (agriculture, drinking water, industry, marshes, and the environment ... And others), and the Turkish ambassador promised to follow up with the competent Turkish authorities to hold a meeting and study the requests of the Iraqi side, and that the Ministry of Water Resources' action came from its keenness to secure all water needs, including the water quota for the sustainability of the marshes.

- Following the official visit of the Prime Minister, Mr. Mustafa Al-Kazemi to Ankara - Turkey on 12/17-2020 with a high-level ministerial delegation, talks were held with Turkish officials, headed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to discuss several files, including issues of cooperation in the water field and activating joint committees between the two countries.

- The Minister of Water Resources met with His Excellency the Turkish ambassador, Fatih Yildiz, in Baghdad on 5/12/2020 and 5/1/2021. During the meeting, a protocol for cooperation and discussion of water releases to Iraq in the Tigris River was discussed after the operation of the Ilisu Dam, which was identified as one of the paragraphs of the protocol officially sent to the Turkish side, and on the day 15-1-2021 The Minister of Water Resources met via closed-circuit television with the Special Envoy of the Turkish President for Water Affairs, Mr. Faisal Oglu, and it was agreed on:
  a) A meeting was held on the end of February of 2020 to discuss the protocol of joint cooperation between the two countries.
  b) Activating the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2009, which was amended in 2014, and it is hoped that it will be ratified by the Turkish Parliament to enter into force.
  c) Discussing the proposed and joint projects, including finding the proposed research center that Iraq, represented by the Minister, directed the agreement to send an invitation to visit a Turkish technical delegation to Baghdad to discuss the establishment of the research center.
  d) An agreement to hold an attendance meeting in Ankara between the two countries to agree on a draft joint cooperation protocol.
• Measures taken in respect of the Iranian side:
  - Achieving a number of meetings between Ministry of Water Resources and The Islamic Republic of Iran in Baghdad:
    a) The meeting with the advisor of the Iranian ambassador on 1/8/2020, during which all issues related to the joint water file were reviewed.
    b) Mr. Iraj Masjedi / Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Baghdad visited with a number of specialists from the embassy representatives in Baghdad on 7/26/2020 and presented during the meeting the following:
      ▪ Discuss the problems facing Iraq in its joint waters with Iran.
      ▪ Enhancing cooperation in the water issue.
      ▪ Holding joint meetings to discuss the problems of the common border rivers (Little Zab, Sirwan, Karun, Karkah, valleys and other eastern tributaries) that suffer from fluctuating water revenues.
      ▪ The problem of pollution of the Shatt al-Arab.
      ▪ Land salinity due to the throwing of Iranian drainage water.
  - Sending letters from the Ministry of Water Resources to the Iranian side through Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the following issues:
    ▪ The lack of lower Zab imports feeding Dukan Dam since the last two summer seasons, on 3/3/2020.
    ▪ Imports of the Sirwan River feeding into Darbandikhan Dam fluctuated on 11/19/2020.
    ▪ The problems that Iraq suffers from due to the diversion of the waters of the Sirwan River Basins and the Little Zab River on 22/11/2020.
  - Setting a date to hold a joint technical meeting between the two countries to discuss the problems of the rivers mentioned above and border rivers such as Kalal Badra, Al-Tayyib, Dwireej, Tarsakh, and Al-Shehabi.
  - The Ministry participated in a bilateral meeting between the two countries in Tehran on 10/20/2020, chaired by the Senior Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry, to discuss the pending files, which include the Shatt al-Arab, river, sea and land borders, and common rivers.
  - The Iraqi side discussed with the Iranian side regarding the maritime, river and land borders in several meetings, the last of which was on 12/1/2020 and 2/12/2020 in Tehran and Baghdad for the purpose of returning the Taluk line
in the Shatt al-Arab to its normal state in 1975, and the meetings did not reach an agreement to resolve the issue of the river borders in 1975. Shatt al-Arab.

- The meeting of the fourth session of the Iraqi-Iranian joint committee was held on 12-13/1/2021 in Tehran in the presence of a number of specialists from the two countries to discuss water issues with the Iranian technical team and agree on cooperation in the water field for the purpose of discussing water issues between the two countries.

Cooperation with the Iranian side is proceeding slowly, but past to develop a cooperation mechanism to guarantee Iraq's water rights from the common rivers and that reaching an agreement will guarantee Iraq's rights to feed the marshes from the Tigris River and then to the marshes via (Little Zab, Sirwan and valleys) or directly from the Karkh and Karun rivers and during the floods from Al-Tayyib, Dwireej, Tarsakh, Kalal Badra and Al-Shehabi.

- Measures taken in the respect of the Syrian side:
  - A proposal to hold a technical meeting between the Republic of Iraq and Syria with two delegations from the Iraqi Ministry of Water Resources and the Syrian Ministry of Irrigation on 29/9/2019, and it was postponed to further notice at the request of the Syrian side due to the spread of the pandemic (Covid 19).
  - Agreeing to hold a closed-circuit TV meeting during the first half of February 2021, waiting for a response from the Syrian side.

- Other affairs
  - The Ministry of Water Resources followed up with the concerned authorities in the country, Iraq's accession to the 1992 Water Agreement / Helsinki for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers Resolution No. 272 was issued containing the draft law in its final form and referred to the Iraqi Parliament, where it was read the second reading in the Iraqi Parliament Referring to the ministry’s efforts, the parliament voted on the law of the Republic of Iraq’s accession to this agreement in its session held on Tuesday 10/28/2020. The ministry also participated in several meetings related to the agreement, the most important of which was the fifteenth meeting of the working group on integrated management of water resources, which was organized (via the Internet) for the period 9 / 30- 10/2/2020. Work is
underway to prepare the national report for Iraq in accordance with the notes of the Convention Secretariat and present it at the appropriate times.

- The participation of the Ministry of Water Resources in the meeting of the Regional Center for Urban Water Management, which was held via the Internet on 9/23/2020 and chaired by the Iranian Ministry of Energy, during which the Minister of Water Resources delivered a speech in which he emphasized the challenges that Iraq faces in managing its water resources, the most important of which is water imports coming from the rivers The Tigris and the Euphrates and the tributaries that originate from the eastern side (Iran) and flow into the Tigris River and the marshes.

- The set paper for the European Unite mission.

- This ministry formed in 2019 the Directive and preparatory committees and prepared a technical-legal working paper for the purpose of presenting it to the experts of the European Union mission and explaining the negative and environmental impacts and the impact of water scarcity as a result of irrigation projects carried out by upstream countries on Iraq and studying other negative effects that affected imports such as Climate changes and security reasons have affected the environment of the Shatt al-Arab and the Iraqi Marshlands. The paper included Iran's position and its water policy, in which he explained Iran's exclusion of the Karun River, which flows into the Shatt al-Arab and the Karkh River, which flows into the Hawizheh Marsh, from the concept of shared waterways and its failure to discuss with them within the protocol that includes utilizing the waters of shared waterways, knowing that these two rivers have an effect Great on the environment of the Shatt al-Arab and al-Hawizheh lagoon, and the Iranian side built dams on the Karun River and diverted its estuary from the Shatt al-Arab to the Gulf directly through the Bahmanshir Canal, in addition to the Iranian side building a dirt dam along the al-Hawizheh lagoon to reserve the water coming from the Karkh River.

8- While the State party appreciates that the listing of the property on the World Heritage List provides adequate legal protection, it reiterates its request to the State party to complete the designation of all natural components of the property as protected areas in order to provide effective protection under national legislative and administrative systems, as required in the Operational Guidelines.

Iraq is serious about securing legal protection for natural ingredients within the national framework. A draft law has been submitted that provides protection for
natural property. The last part of it included punitive provisions for anyone who caused damage to the natural and cultural components of the property and its natural resources

9- We affirm our great concern for the second time regarding the continued exposure of the natural components of the property to oil and gas developments, and refers to the Committee's firm position that oil and gas exploration and exploitation are not in line with the state of world heritage, and strongly urges the State party to abide by a permanent commitment not to explore or exploit oil and gas inside the property. And ensuring that any such activities outside the property do not negatively affect the Outstanding Global Value.

- Among the outcomes of its meetings and the last of which was the fifteenth meeting of the The Higher Committee for the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Ahwar of Southern Iraq as a World Heritage Property, a recommendation was approved its core was (obligating oil companies not to undertake any development process for oil industries or any investments without coordination with The Higher Committee and not prejudice to the boundaries of the property with the possibility of doing these actions outside The boundaries of the property in a way that does not cause harm to the property itself) and as a result, the Ministry of Oil directed all oil companies with a letter attached (3) and circulated the recommendation by a decision.

- The continuation of the work of the Committee for Ensuring Good and Implementing the Ecological System of the Marshlands Property" Formed by Higher Committee for the Management of the Marshlands as a world heritage property to follow up the work and oil explorations of the areas adjacent to the borders of the natural components of the property Image (2).

- Continuing to monitor and oblige the Basra Oil Company to the companies investing within the licensing rounds to adhere to environmental impact studies and to national and international standards in their work in the areas adjacent to the marshes.
10-Requests the State party to provide to the World Heritage Center data on overfishing and illegal poaching of birds and fish, including the number of prosecutions and convictions for these illegal activities, and to further strengthen its capacity for legal protection, implementation and management to monitor these activities.

Iraq is continuing its efforts to curb the phenomenon of overfishing through:

- Monitoring fishing activities through representatives of project departments of the Iraqi Marshlands and Wetlands Recovery Center and representatives of the environmental directorates of the Ministry of Health and Environment and its detachments from the Ministry of Interior and the most important activities are following up on border guard patrols to prevent overfishing in border areas close to their field of work in Basra and Maysan, as explained in Photo No. (3).
- Raising the environmental awareness of fishermen in particular and the local population in general about the dangers of these practices and their impact on biodiversity and disturbing the natural balance of the property.
- Some clans from the villages bordering the marsh areas using tribal custom, including the Albu Ghannam clan in Bani Hashem district (Al-Kahla district), issuing a decision to punish and banish fishermen who use illegal methods of hunting birds and fish by (nets, electric shock, poisons).
- The Ministry of Interior detachments in Al-Chibayish and Al-Fahd districts banned cars from loading fish for the period limited between 2/15/2020 to 4/15/2020, which is the breeding season, as this measure greatly contributed to preserving biodiversity and increasing the fish wealth of these areas.
- On 9/11/2020, the Rapid Response Forces of the Ministry of Interior carried out an airdrop in the marshes of Maysan to stop and prevent hunting by electrical devices.
- Conducting field tours to spread awareness and education for fishermen and residents of the marshes about the extent of harm by using illegal methods of fishing and its effect on the natural balance and on the sustainability of the marshes, as shown in picture No. (4).

![a meeting with fishermen](image1)

![a meeting with fishermen](image2)

- The investigation of the sub-committee emanating from the National Committee for the Management of the Marshlands as a property of the World Heritage by holding its meetings to review the laws and legislations in force related to poaching for several times, the last of which was on 12/29/2020, for the purpose of preparing a draft of a unified law to reduce the phenomenon of overfishing,
and approving a recommendation to limit the validity of granting The license to hunt wild animals and weapons used in hunting is in the Iraqi Hunters Association as it is the official body authorized to grant basic licenses to hunters, with the National Committee for the Management of the Marshlands as a World Heritage property through its representative (Ministry of Interior) to form a committee whose task is to list the licenses and weapons used in hunting that are held by fishermen according to non-licenses Fundamentalists granted by unofficial bodies, as shown in picture (5).

- The Ministry of Water Resources, through its formations and in coordination with the Ministry of Interior, carried out field trips to lift the bypassing of the main and subsidiary rivers with regard to water quotas and overfishing.

- The Environmental Police Directorate filed lawsuits against fishermen who practice illegal fishing after seizing them and confiscating their fishing equipment, and due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, these cases yet to be resolved.

11- It also urges the State party to update its integrated property management plan, and to encourage the development of updated management plans for each component of the property.

Despite the health ban due to the Corona (Covid 19) pandemic. CRIMW has conducted an update of the topographical surveys of the sites listed below, were completed by the end of 2020:

1. The natural component of the western Hammar Marsh
2. The natural component of Hawizeh Marsh
3. Part of the natural component of the Central Marshlands (Abu Zark Marsh)
12- It also welcomes the measures taken to ensure that tourism activities do not harm the property, and reiterates its request to the State party to develop and implement a comprehensive tourism plan for the property, organize visits, ensure visitor safety, sustainable and adequate tourism practices, infrastructure and facilities.

No measures were taken regarding this paragraph due to the Corona pandemic (Covid 19).

13- Also calls upon the State party to continue meaningfully engaging local communities on issues related to water use, rights-based approaches to management and the application of traditional ecological knowledge to any planned new construction.

No measures were taken regarding this paragraph due to the Corona virus pandemic (Covid 19).

14- It also expresses its regret that the joint observation mission of the World Heritage Center IUCN / International Council of Antiquities and Sites that is scheduled to visit the property and has not been able to do it yet, and also reiterates its request that the mission be completed as soon as possible.

No visits to the joint missions due to the circumstances of the Corona virus pandemic (Covid 19).

15. The State party reminds the need to provide information on any future plans for rehabilitation or new construction projects that may affect the outstanding global value of the property, in line with Paragraph 172 of the Guiding Principles, before making any decisions that are difficult to eliminate negative impacts.

Projects are proposed to be carried out inside the property by the Higher Committee for the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Ahwar of Southern Iraq as a World Heritage Property. Noting that these projects in line with environmental regulations to preserve the marshes and wetlands. It’s also support the infrastructure of local communities in those areas as shown in Annex (7):

1-Implement a tourist resort in AL-Chibaesh.

2-Rehabilitate guest houses.
Fifth: Property of the Southern Marshes of Iraq: Natural Components Management

The natural components of the property are managed by the Center for Restoration of the Iraqi Marshes and Wetlands at the Ministry of Water Resources (CRIMW), established in 2003, mandated by the Iraqi Government which assigned the center to manage, coordinate, monitor and implement the programs to restore the marshes through partnership with local and international shareholders. In 2011 and according to Cabinet Resolution No. (254) of 2011, the tasks of implementing the terms and provisions of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands were assigned to the CRIMW. The center consists of a group of experts who exercise their duties in implementing the World Heritage and Ramsar convention Commitments. The below table shows the number of male and female degree holders in various specializations in the center.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certificate</th>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The center has three local administrations, in Basra, Messan, and Thi-Qar, the three southern governorates in which the marshes are located. Each administration is divided into a group of divisions, each of which is responsible for monitoring part of the marshes, as shown in the scheme and map below.
Sixth: Littering Exceeds

Due to the Corona pandemic (COVID-19) and the partial urbanization that restricted the movement of project departments in the governorates from constant monitoring, overtaking littering appeared in two locations within the boundaries of the Core Zone of the property, and great importance was given to the issue by Central for Restoration of Iraqi Marshes and Wetlands and the establishment of lawsuits against the transgressors to raise The overtaking and cleaning of the two sites and the center won the two calls, and the two sites were completely cleaned. Below is a map (5) showing the areas overtaken by them and pictures showing the status of the two sites before and after the removal of the bypass.

Waste disposal sites
Seventh: Education and Spreading Awareness

Despite the Corona pandemic (Covid 19), continuing awareness campaigns for the local population by government institutions and Non-governmental organization, preparing educational leaflets, posters and videos, in addition to receiving foreign delegations and introducing them to the exceptional value of the marsh areas and ways to preserve and preserve them.

- The visit of Mrs. Daniel Bell, Director of the Human Rights Office at the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), and Catherine Terrog the United Nations High Representative for Human Rights in Iraq on December 23, 2020.
- A group of Italian excavation workers visited Abu Tabira Hill in Al-Nasiriyah. They were amazed by the human settlement and the natural landscape inside the marshes (Chibayish).
- CRIMW implemented the Marsh Promo Festival for its second year on 11/28/2020, which included short promo films that carry ideas about preventing overfishing and the relationship of Al-Ma'dan (the native marshes inhabitants) to the nature and with biodiversity, as the shortest way to educate and spread awareness of different segments of Iraqis.

- Defining the importance of including the streets on the World Heritage List, and holding an exhibition of pictures and handicrafts and a celebration in which a group of representatives of governmental and non-governmental institutions and the people of the region participated.

- Producing documentary films about the marshes in memory of their inclusion on the World Heritage List, as shown below:

  - Film "Revitalizing the Marshlands" / Iraqi Media Network / 2020 / in cooperation with the Central for Restoration of Iraqi Marshes and Wetlands. (https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1827604130707866&id=590004911134467)
  - "The Marshlands ... The Kingdom of Water" / Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Archeology. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfEkL92OYu8)
  - A documentary on the natural component (Huwaizah Marshes) / Central for Restoration of Iraqi Marshes and Wetlands / 2020.
  - A documentary about the natural component (the central marshes) / Central for Restoration of Iraqi Marshes and Wetlands / 2020.

- Holding a symposium by the General Authority for Antiquities and Heritage on the tourism importance of world heritage sites in Iraq on 7/21/2020, coinciding with the fourth anniversary of the inclusion of marshes and archaeological sites on the World Heritage List.

- Holding a symposium by the Faculty of Arts / Dhi Qar University and in cooperation with the Marsh Research Center at Dhi Qar University, a scientific symposium entitled "Environmental sustainability of the monuments and marshes in southern Iraq" on 08/21/2020.
Eighth: the competent authority signature

Mahdi Rasheed Al-Hamdani
Head of the Higher Committee for the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Ahwar of southern Iraq as a world Heritage property
Minister of Water Resources of the Republic of Iraq
Annex (1)

The photos hereunder declare the natural reality of the components in the Marshes in 2020

Natural Components – East Hammar Marshes

Marshes Inhabitants on the Edges of the East Hammar Marsh

Photo reflects the abundance of water

Biodiversity

Al-Kaiba Plant (health phenomena)
Green Climate Organization

Natural Components - Central Marshes

Marshes inhabitants

Al-Kaiba Plant (health phenomena)
Photo reflects the abundance of water

Eng Adil Nama
13/5/2020
Abu Zraq marsh

Biodiversity - Green Climate Organization

Natural Components - Al-Hawizeh Marsh

Marshes inhabitants in the edges of Al-Hawizeh marshes and the economic reality

Photo reflects the abundance of water

biodiversity
Natural Components- West Hammar Marsh
Annex (2)

The photos hereunder show the meetings and conferences with neighboring countries to negotiate water issues, including participations in the meetings of International Agreements.
Annex (3) – An official letter requiring oil companies not to carry out any oil exploration activities within the natural components of the marsh property
Minutes of the fifteenth meeting of Higher Committee for the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Ahwar of Southern Iraq as a World Heritage Property.

First: Background:
Meeting date: 8/19/2020
Meeting place: Ministry of Water Resources building
Meeting time: 10 am
Meeting agenda: (attached)
Attendance List: (attached)

Second: The objectives of the meeting:
1- Follow up on the work of the aforementioned committee, and review the measures taken on the recommendations of the previous meeting.
2- Complete the implementation of the requirements for including the marshes on the World Heritage List.

Third: Summary of the meeting:
1- The Minister of Water Resources welcomed the attendees and stressed the importance of preserving the property of the marshes with its natural and cultural components and achieving benefits from joining The Ahwar of Southern Iraq Property on the World Heritage List and the importance of the meetings of the National Committee that discusses issues related to the Marshlands and with the contribution of all stakeholders. His Excellency asked the attendees to make their proposals and proposals flow. In the national interest and the interest of the country and within the principle of partnership and cooperation to highlight the seriousness of the Iraqi government in protecting its heritage property in accordance with national and international laws and standards, adding that the Ministry is working diligently to secure the quantities of water required for the inundation of the marshes, monitor the quality of water and conduct recycling to ensure its sustainability and preserve biodiversity in it.

2- His Excellency indicated the necessity to take the necessary measures to ensure the continued survival of The Ahwar of Southern Iraq Property on the World Heritage List due to their importance by supporting the neighboring countries, as
these countries have not yet provided any international support for this issue and that the greatest weight falls on the shoulders of the Ministry of Water Resources through its keenness to provide Water quotas and quantities of water needed to sustain the marsh areas. His Excellency praised the role of Central for Restoration of Iraqi Marshes and Wetlands represented by the Director-General for her constant eagerness to provide and maintain these shares, and the Ministry of Water Resources succeeded in achieving a high flood rate, as according to the outcomes of the strategic study prepared by the ministry, it reached a flood rate of more than (140%) of the area targeted for the study above. And the proportion (76%) of the area subject to flooding according to the water imports for the past year and the revenues that have been strengthened for this year until last July, and despite these percentages, the ministry’s ambition is greater to flood more areas than the areas specified for inundations. The excesses of the water shares of neighboring lands affect the plans of the ministry in that.

3-He indicated the importance of joint coordination between the Ministry of Water Resources and the upstream countries in supporting the marshes file by providing Iraq with the necessary water quotas as it is the heritage, history and originality of the country and it is important to preserve it.

4-The marshes are constantly exposed to violations by throwing waste, sewage and stagnant water directly into them. His Excellency stressed the necessity for a clear and significant role for the Ministry of Health and Environment by taking samples of pollutants that are directly thrown into the marshes and examining them and identifying areas that are exposed to throwing toxins. And pollutants, determining the points of throwing health waste, and seeking the help of local governments, stressing the need for there to be institutional accountability for the importance of the issue, as well as stressing the role of the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works and the importance of taking serious steps to divert the exits and solvents of pollutants away from the marshes as the latter is a natural reservoir of water at a time of scarcity that feeds the river immediately Low levels.

5-Review of developments related to the current reality of the water, environmental and cultural situation in the Marshlands.

6-Reviewing and discussing the measures taken on the recommendations of the minutes of the fourteenth meeting of Higher Committee for the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Ahwar of Southern Iraq as a World Heritage Property, which included:
- The measures taken regarding the review of laws and legislations in force related to overfishing, and the advisor of the Parliamentary Committee for Agriculture, Water and Streets presented the legislative role to provide legal protection for the natural components through coordination with the Ministry of Water Resources, the Ministry of Health and Environment and other concerned parties.

- The work of the Ministry of Oil within the boundaries of the property as well as within the buffer zones, provided that it does not affect the property and that national and international standards are followed by oil licensing companies in the areas of the marshes, and the representative of the Ministry of Oil stated that there are sums deducted due to violations recorded by the Ministry of Health and Environment on oil companies that are not Through it raising the damage and requesting that these sums be transferred to the National Committee to use them to provide services to the areas of the marshes and the local population, each according to the governorate in which the violation is recorded, and to raise the damage resulting from it for the public interest and the marshes in particular.

- Reviewing the activities of civil society organizations. The Civil Society Organization, the Identity Center for Studies, indicated that Iraq ignored grants and donations from international organizations for the lack of representation of the Ahwar in international conferences.

- Requirements for inclusion on the World Heritage List and the need for financial liquidity for all concerned ministries to enable them to implement the requirements that fall within their responsibility with the representative of the Ministry of Planning and Finance.

Fourth: Recommendations

1-Central for Restoration of Iraqi Marshes and Wetlands coordinates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers and civil society organizations related to the Ahwar file and the secretariat of the Higher Committee to set up a mechanism to benefit from grants, gifts, sponsorship and donations provided by international organizations, provided that a report is submitted to the Chairman of the National Committee that includes the results And recommendations to be presented to the Prime Minister to follow up on their implementation, as well as coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and relevant authorities for the purpose of holding an international conference with the parties supporting the Ahwar inside Iraq.
2- The necessity of the attendance of the parties concerned with the meeting at the same level as the level of representation in the Higher Committee to ensure communication, to convey a clear picture of what is included in the meetings, and the secretariat of the Higher Committee follows up on the issue and confirms that all the authorities are present at the subsequent meetings.

3- Continuing negotiations with neighboring countries to secure fair and equitable quantities of water for all uses, including the marshes areas. The riparian countries are supposed to strive with Iraq to preserve this international property.

4- The necessity for the Ministry of Health and Environment to submit reports on the issue of abuses occurring in the marsh areas and the measures taken in their regard and inform the committee’s presidency of urgent and important issues on a weekly basis so that they can be presented in cabinet sessions for the purpose of informing the government about the details of those violations and the measures taken in their regard.

5- Confirmation of providing the committee’s secretariat the position of the activities of the ministries represented in the Higher Committee and the civil society organizations regarding the education and awareness campaigns for the local marsh residents.

6- The necessity for the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Finance to support the Ahwar file and to pay special attention on the issue of financial allocations and launch the disbursement of all ministries concerned with managing the property to implement projects and activities that meet the requirements of The Ahwar listing The World Heritage List, and securing financial liquidity for this.

7- Continuing the unification of laws and legislations in effect related to overfishing. The sub-committee emanating from the National Committee should continue to hold its meetings for the purpose of coming up with a unified law to limit this phenomenon and preserve the biodiversity of The Ahwar Property.

8- Transferring the amounts of fines collected by the Ministry of Health and Evidence according to the Environmental Protection and Improvement Law from the activities of oil licensing companies and in violation of the law to the account of the National Committee and distribute them to the concerned authorities to benefit from them in removing the effects of damage as well as providing services to the marshes and their local residents.
9- Oblige oil companies not to Carrying out any development process for oil industries or any investments without coordinating with the National Committee and without prejudice to the boundaries of the property with the possibility of carrying out these works outside the boundaries of the property in a manner that does not cause harm to the property itself.

10- The bodies represented in the Higher Committee should review the memorandum of cooperation to protect and preserve The Ahwar of Southern Iraq property, which was presented to the members represented by the National Committee during the meeting, approved and delivered to the committee’s secretariat in the absence of observations on it.

11- Re-claiming the allocation of funds for the proposed projects within the property submitted by the ministries, Water Resources, Agriculture, Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, Ministry of Education (and scientific research, science and technology) and the General Secretariat approach The Council of Ministers for the purpose of restoring a grade within the operating budget for this year, similar to the budget of 2017, since the implementation of these projects supports the listing file and meets the environmental, economic and social needs of the property and the local population.

12- The need for the governorates to provide service projects that meet the basic needs of the infrastructure of the inhabitants of the marsh areas to the Higher committee for approval.

13- The bodies represented in the Higher Committee must submit the data on the working paper that was distributed to the members during the meeting on a monthly basis, each according to its competence, for the purpose of completing the national reports and submitting them to UNESCO before the approved dates and for fulfilling the international obligations within the World Heritage Convention.

14- Forming a field follow-up committee emanating from Higher Committee for the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Ahwar of Southern Iraq as a World Heritage Property., and each party nominates a representative for it in that committee. The committee is responsible for following up the achievements of the parties concerned with the marshes file, reminding them of their tasks and submitting weekly reports to the Central Committee to ensure the sharing of tasks and responsibilities.
15- Approaching the Ministry of Interior regarding the formation of a police force concerned with monitoring and limiting the issue of violations occurring in the marsh areas and their nutrients.
Annex (4)- Field teams of (CRIMW), water quality and discharges monitoring activities and projects implementation
Organizational Chart of Center for Restoration Marshes & Wetlands
Annex (5)- Education and Awareness-raising
Annex (6)- Environmental studies related to bio-diversity and wildlife conservation in the Ahwar Property

1. A forgotten rodent from the Garden of Eden: what really happened to the long-tailed Nesokia rat in the Mesopotamian marshes?

Abstract: The greater part of expected mammalian extinctions will be of smaller-bodied mammals, including rats which are more generally known only as pests and carriers of pathogens. We address the long-tailed nesokia rat, which is among the least studied Palaearctic mammals. The species is known from merely five specimens, collected between March 1974 and January 1977 within a radius of 30 km around Qurna inside the seasonally flooded Mesopotamian marshes in southern Iraq. In the 1990s, this extensive aquatic habitat has been deliberately reduced to <15% of its original area and the IUCN expressed fear that such a disaster “almost certainly” caused the extinction of the long-tailed nesokia. Although the interventions after 2003 reversed the shrinking trend and marshes started to expand, the continuous presence of the long-tailed nesokia could not be unambiguously confirmed. We provide meagre evidence suggesting that the rat might be still present in the marshes. Next, our habitat modelling shows that the area of the long-tailed nesokia might be more extensive than expected with a highly suitable habitat covering 15,650 km2 of Mesopotamian marshland in Iraq (between Basra and Salah Ad Din provinces) and the Hawizeh Marshes in the adjacent Iranian Khuzestan.

Reference:

2. Migration pattern and wintering population of the Eurasian marsh harrier (Circus aeruginosus) in the Central Marshes, a wetland of international importance in southern Iraq

Abstract: There is scarce information on the migration patterns and population size of the Eurasian marsh harrier (Circus aeruginosus) in Iraq in general and in the southern Mesopotamian wetlands in particular. From February 2018–April 2019, a total of 11 field expeditions were conducted in the Central Marshes (219,700 ha), one of the major Mesopotamian wetlands and Iraq’s National Park, a RAMSAR and
UNESCO site. Two of the field survey objectives were to determine the spatial and temporal distribution and estimate the population size of the migratory/wintering Eurasian marsh harrier in the Central Marshes. Distance sampling on three line transects covering a study plot of 40,000 ha was conducted. Among other wintering Circus harriers, the Eurasian marsh harrier was the most abundant species with a total of 93 individuals recorded. The estimated species densities were 0.0042–0.035 individuals/ha, and the estimated size of the Eurasian marsh harrier migratory population in the Central Marshes was 922.7–7,689.5 individuals. Moreover, the migration phenology and breeding status of the Eurasian marsh harrier in the Central Marshes were investigated. Our efforts did not confirm the breeding of this species during recent years, or since the inundation of the Mesopotamian wetlands in 2003. Furthermore, hunting and trapping were identified as major threats affecting the species which need urgent conservation action.


3. The Diurnal Birds of Prey (Raptors) in the Mesopotamian marshes of southern Iraq with notes on their conservation status

Abstract: Birds of prey (Raptors) are top predator avian species that many migrate annually through Mesopotamian marshes in southern Iraq toward their wintering grounds in Arabia and Africa, while others are breeding residents; however, information on their current status is scarce. From January 2016 to April 2019, a total of 20 field expeditions were conducted in the geographical zone of the Mesopotamian marshes, wetlands of international importance. The survey covered the Central Marshes, Al-Hammar and Hawizeh Marsh. One of the objectives of the field surveys is to list the raptors species that wintering and/or migrating through the Mesopotamian marshes and to understand their current spatial and temporal distribution. In the present study, a total of 32 species of diurnal raptors are recorded through intensive field observations, reviewing literature records, and personal communications of unpublished data. Moreover, eight species listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature IUCN Red List are recorded which highlight the ecological importance of the Mesopotamian marshes as a major stopover site for globally threatened raptors. Besides species persecution, observed threats such as habitat destruction, climate change, and pollution were
severely influencing birds of prey communities in the Mesopotamian marshes which warrant further conservation actions.


4. Spatial genetic structure in the vulnerable smooth-coated otter (Lutrogale perspicillata, Mustelidae): towards an adaptive conservation management of the species

Abstract: Since Fraser and Bernatchez’s seminal paper, the concept of adaptive conservation has inspired in situ and ex situ management aimed at preserving the genetic distinctiveness of natural populations and their associated evolutionary potential. This goal is particularly worthwhile in an epoch of rampant biotic homogenisation (i.e., the progressive replacement of native biotas with locally expanding non-natives) driven by global change in the context of the ongoing Anthropocene extinction. Under these premises, we provided here a molecular biogeographic framework based on macro-regional scale sampling to support conservation initiatives for the smooth-coated otter (Lutrogale perspicillata). This species, ranging from Pakistan across the Indian subcontinent and Indochina to Sundaland and occurring also in Iraq and extreme southwestern Iran with an isolated population, has experienced a rapid decline over the last decades and is now listed as ‘Vulnerable’ by the IUCN. We sequenced a 307 bp-long fragment of the mitochondrial Cytochrome-b (Cyt-b) gene in modern and museum samples (n = 77, of which 23 are new with respect to a previous study) from the entirety of the species range, including holotypes of the three traditionally recognised morphological subspecies (L. p. maxwelli, L. p. sindica, and L. p. perspicillata). We corroborated the occurrence of three patently diverging genetic groups (Middle East, South, and South East Asia) and defined their spatial boundaries. Incidentally, we found that the holotype of L. p. perspicillata from Indonesia (dated 1821) held oriental small-clawed otter (Aonyx cinereus) maternal DNA. Although a few evident morphological similarities shared by this specimen with the oriental small-clawed otter cast serious doubts on its current taxonomical identification, it is suggested that the recently disclosed hybridisation in the wild between L. perspicillata and A. cinereus in Singapore might be more geographically extensive and/or have occurred earlier than believed. In conclusion, the molecular biogeographic picture herein is intended to form the
basis for supporting management in ex situ facilities (e.g., exchange of individuals among zoos) and for implementing the genetic tracking of illegally traded otters in the attainment of adaptive conservation for L. perspicillata.


5. Using artwork as a tool to raise public awareness for the conservation of Iraq’s Smooth-coated Otter lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli

Overview: The vulnerable endemic subspecies of the smooth-coated otter (Lutrogale perspicillata) is L. p. maxwelli and it is found in the extensive reed beds and marshy lakes of the Lower Mesopotamian marshes of Southern Iraq. Until recently it was believed to be confined to Iraq but it has now also been confirmed in Southwestern Iran. Following its discovery by Gavin Maxwell in the 1950s, its population faced a dramatic decline mainly due to habitat destruction and severe illegal persecution. The drainage of the marshes in the 1990s put the species on the verge of extinction. The smooth-coated otter along with its sympatric Eurasian otters (Lutra lutra) are targeted by local Marsh Arabs wherever and whenever possible for their fur or to be raised as pets; therefore, hunting of adults and trapping of juveniles and cubs was identified as a major threat to both species. The conservation of L. p. maxwelli is one of the IWC objectives, especially related to testing new approaches as tools to reduce the impact of illegal persecution. In cooperation with Iraqi Green Climate Organization (IGCO) and Al-Chebaeish Organization for Ecotourism (AOE) has recently encouraged young Iraqi artists to express their thoughts regarding illegal persecution and the impact of climate change on the population of L. p. maxwelli in Iraq. The aim is to use art as a tool to encourage the Iraqi public to feel more responsible for the conservation of their native natural heritage and encourage the Iraqi authorities to enforce wildlife protection legislation. Several artistic masterpieces were submitted by many Iraqi artists for consideration of the IWC, and among many creative contributions, two pieces of art were selected to transmit the message to the Iraqi public.
Abstract: The smooth-coated otter *Lutrogale perspicillata* (endemic subspecies *L. p. maxwelli*) is a flagship and endemic subspecies in Iraq and is confined to the extensive marshlands in the South. It was described for the first time from the Al-Hawizeh Marsh in 1950s. The population size was enigmatic and it was believed to have faced global extinction due to disturbance during the Iraq-Iran war in 1980s and subsequent drainage of the Lower Mesopotamian wetlands in 1990s. In addition, there have since been no attempts to investigate the population which is vital to design further conservation actions. Five field surveys were conducted in March and July 2017 in the Hawizeh Marsh (1377km²), a transboundary wetland of international importance (UNESCO and RAMSAR site) in Southern Iraq. Linetransects covering three study plots were performed and five individuals were recorded. The estimated species density was (0.6753 individuals/km²) and the estimated population size in the Hawizeh Marsh was ca. 930 individuals. This is the first preliminary estimation for the *L. p. maxwelli* population in Iraq and further surveys may reveal better estimations. The current estimation suggests that the species has an Extent of Occurrence (EOO) less than 5000km² and an Area of Occupancy (AOO) less than 500km² with severely fragmented locations (≤5); therefore, a comprehensive review of its conservation status is recommended. Furthermore, the species has recently been observed in the Hoor ol-Azim Wetland in the Iranian territory adjunct to the international border with Southeastern Iraq. This is the first confirmed occurrence for this species in Iran. The otters are probably using the monotonic marshy habitats to move from Southeastern Iraq into Southwestern Iran where transboundary populations may be present, a subject which requires further investigation, international collaboration, and a comprehensive review of the conservation status of the study species.


7. First record of colour aberration in Basra Reed Warbler Acrocephalus griseldis (Hartlaub, 1891) (Passeriformes: Acrocephalidae) from Central Marshes of southern Iraq, with notes on its intraspecific/interspecific behavior

Abstract: Pigment disorders such as albinism, leucism and progressive greying, which cause the absence of melanin pigments in all or parts of the plumage and bare parts, have been reported in many wild bird populations including Acrocephalus warblers. Basra Reed Warbler Acrocephalus griseldis (Hartlaub, 1891) is a restricted-range species confined to the extensive reed beds of Mesopotamian marshes. It is listed as Endangered due to breeding habitat degradation, water scarcity and climate change. In April 2018, a partly white plumaged Basra Reed Warbler was sighted in Central Marshes in southern Iraq. This is the first report of such a plumage aberration in this species. The nature of the aberration involved an intraspecific/interspecific behavior of the white plumaged Basra Reed Warbler are described.


8. Using GIS Technique for evaluating water quality of Abu Zarag marsh during the flood season

Abstract: This research deals with the most important heritage in Iraq, which are the Iraqi marshes, especially Abu Zarag marsh in Al-Nasiriyah city south of Iraq. The research is divided into two parts. The first part deals with evaluating the water quality parameters of Abu Zarag marsh for the period from December 2018 to April 2019 which is the flooding season. The parameters are Temperature, pH, Electrical Conductivity, Total Dissolved Solids, Alkalinity, Total Hardness, Turbidity, Dissolved Oxygen, Sulfate, Nitrate. The second part is a comparison between the water quality parameters during the recent period with the same period during the previous years
from 2014 to 2019. The results are represented in Arc GIS map. Modeling and simulation of flooding were made during the study period through the Arc GIS-Arc Scene program. The results of the research indicated the refilling of the Iraqi marshes especially Abu Zarag marsh, and recovery of the natural ambient in the south of Iraq.

Reference: Ahmed Zamel Hassan1 and Assist. Prof. Dr. Nawar O.A. Al-Musawi2
1&2Civil Engineering Dept., University of Baghdad/Iraq

9. Heritage and cultural healing: Iraq in a post-Daesh era

ABSTRACT Against the backdrop of the destruction of Iraqi heritage over the past quarter of a century, this article critically reviews key aspects of the current state of Iraq’s cultural heritage, including damage to heritage buildings caused by Daesh in Iraq’s second largest city, Mosul. We bring together Iraqi and non-Iraqi expertise in heritage, archaeology, and human rights law to frame our approach, building on the movement to link cultural diversity, heritage, and cultural rights. We emphasise the need for planning to enhance protection of Iraq’s heritage, in particular through the preparation of inventories, the provision of resources for heritage education in schools and the development of Iraq’s museum sector. Iraq’s presence on the UNESCO World Heritage Lists needs to be enhanced, and the issues of illicit site looting and traffic in looted antiquities must be addressed within international contexts. Iraq’s future accession as State Party to the 1999 Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention is a priority in achieving these goals. The paper stresses the need for co-creation of heritage knowledge and a gender-sensitive human rights approach for the future of Iraq’s globally significant cultural heritage.

Reference: Roger Matthews a, Qais Hussain Rasheedb, Mónica Palermo Fernández a, Seán Fobbe c, Karel Nováček d, Rozhen Mohammed-Amine, Simone Mühlf and Amy Richardson a Department of Archaeology, University of Reading, Reading, UK; bState Board of Antiquities and Heritage, Baghdad, Iraq; cRASHID International e.V., Postfach 118, Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, Munich, Germany; dDepartment of History, Palacký University Olomouc, OlomoucCzech Republic, Europe; eResearch Center, Sulaimani Polytechnic University, Kurdistan Region, Iraq; fInstitut für Vorderasiatische Archäologie, Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, Munich, Germany
10. Study and evaluation the Marshes and surrounding areas in south of Iraq.

Abstract: In this study, the marshlands in southern Iraq were investigated, focusing on the Hawizeh Marshlands and adjacent areas, by studying the scenario and quantities of water, in addition to the hydraulic and hydrochemical characteristics. To accomplish the objects of this study the researcher visited some fields, made interview with farmers, specialists, authorities and directorates related to this study. The results of this study indicate that there is a huge problem existed in the drainage systems with absence of natural outlets, the discharges of drainage water are towards Al- Hawizeh marsh which flow back its water into Tigris river through several canals, increasing salinity, scare of water, miss-use of land, lack of governments efforts to promote agricultural production leads to loss of soil productivity and land degradation.

Reference: HusamAl-Nussairi1, and KhalidaHassan, State University of Land use planning, Moscow 105064, Russia, College of Agriculture and Forestry, Duhok University, Duhok 42001, Kurdistan Region, Iraq

11. Evaluation of Water Quality Parameters in Marshes Zone Southern of Iraq Based on Remote Sensing and GIS Techniques

Abstract: Al-Hawizeh Marsh is considered a major marsh in the south of Iraq with a longitude of 47° 32″–47° 45 and latitude of 31° 30″–31° 42″, length of 80 km and width of 30 km, while the depth is from 1.5 to 4 m. It has a significant impact on the ecosystem and provides habitat for several types of living creatures. The surface water and the agricultural lands surrounding this marsh suffered from high level degrees of salinity. In the last decades, radical deterioration of water quality in this marsh happened because of the post-war-related events and several human activities. Landsat-8 data was used to predict and evaluate the spatial variation and map distributions of the salinity, SO4 and CaCO3 within Al-Hawizeh Marsh during the two seasons in the year 2017 based on the development of salinity and minerals mathematical equations. The evaluated values for salinity, SO4 and CaCO3 are found to be minimal in winter and maximum in autumn. The values of correlation coefficient (R2) between the real data and the equation results for the salinity, SO4 and CaCO3 during the two seasons are 0.95, 0.96 and 0.92, respectively

Reference:
Hashim Ali Hasab & Hussain A. Jawad & Hayder Dibs & Hussain Musa Hussain & Nadhir Al-Ansari
Annex (7)- Projects are proposed to be carried out inside the property

**Project name:** Iraqi Hunting Club – Al-Chibayish

**Description:** The project will take place in the area between the Euphrates river and Chiba’ash – Mdaemon Road in Al-Chibayish district at Thi-Qar Governorate. The project area is 2.5 hectares, consisting of a Hotel, Restaurant, Café, Celebrations Hall with a capacity of 300 persons, an Amusement Park, Football and Tennis Fields, berth for boats, Green spaces, Parking for Cars and Services Buildings. The final designs distinguished compatibility with the marshland environment and the Sumerian civilization.

**Objectives:** Provide an incentive for developing the land to support tourism in the area based on the history of the region, taking into account the property environment preservation by simulating the cultural values of the region through the project designs. Promote Thi-qar governorate as a tourist destination by constructing tourist infrastructure in the marshes, in addition to providing job opportunities for local communities, especially youth and women.

Ecotourism is an important source of revenue for those native to the marshes. But there is virtually no infrastructure to accommodate the tourists in the area. A hotel complex and touristic eco-village inside the marshes should be created to provide services to those wishing to visit the area. The benefits that ecotourism is expected to bring to the local Marshlands’ economy through the project are balanced with the property's conservation and protection. Principles for sustainable tourism and associated infrastructure were taken into account to ensure a light footprint of such activities.
The Ahwar of Southern Iraq
Refuge of Biodiversity and Relict Landscape of the Mesopotamian Cities

Project location
Project name: Rehabilitation and development of the Tourism and Sustainable Development Department – Al-Chibayish

Description: Creating guesthouses and develop the tourism and sustainable development department Center for Restoration of Iraqi Marshes and Wetlands in Al-Chibayish city. The area of the project located between the Euphrates river and Chibayish – Mdaina Road in Al-Chibayish district at Thi-Qar Governorate. The project consisting of a Meetings and Celebrations Main Hall, 16 Bedrooms, 2 tradition guesthouse, Green spaces, Parking for Cars and Services Buildings. The final designs distinguished compatibility with the marshland environment and the Sumerian civilization.

Objectives: Promoting the importance of the marshes as a world heritage property by supporting scientific and tourism activities, providing accommodation and reception place to scientific and official delegations coming to the marsh areas, holding meetings and conferences as well as an administrative site. The project provides temporary job opportunities for local communities, especially youth and women during the activities holding period.

An eco-friendly building and tradition materials was used to create the project buildings that simulate the cultural heritage of the marshlands. With the help of a group of traditional professionals who have experience in constructing this type of building, which has a folkloric character, in order to ensure the preservation of the historical value of the area.
The Ahwar of Southern Iraq
Refuge of Biodiversity and Relict Landscape of the Mesopotamian Cities

Project location
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Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic, which spread at the beginning of 2020, had a great impact on World Heritage sites, as many sites witnessed partial closure, as well as the case for World Heritage sites in Iraq, where they witnessed partial closure and concentrating the state of monitoring and watching. However, there were some specific conservation work in the world heritage sites in Iraq such as Ashur, Babylon, Ur and Uruk.

Among the incidents that must be mentioned are the meetings that took place via the Internet (online) in which Iraq participated, and the meetings were with the World Heritage Center, and the second meeting was with the Regional Center for World Heritage in Bahrain, and intensive meetings were held between the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities and the Ministry of Water Resources to develop solutions and treatments regarding the Makhoul Dam and its impact on the ancient city of Ashur and archaeological sites in the area.

In addition, the International Organizations Department at the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, and within the framework of World Heritage Capacity Building, has held two World Heritage courses according to the (E-blended learning program), the first course from 15/1/2020 until 15/2/2020 and the second course on 1/11/2020 until 31/12/2020.

Among other documentary work at the world heritage sites, and in response to international demands, the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage completed the first report of the damages assessment in Hatra.
1. World Heritage Sites in Iraq

Many visions, ideas, and plans crystallized with the necessity to carry out conservation, protection and management work, especially in the sites inscribed on the danger list, which were liberated two years ago from the grip of terrorism (Daesh)

Due to the poor security conditions and the lack of financial funding, there were surveys of the affected sites, monitoring the sites in light of the spread of the Corona epidemic, and carrying out some specific conservation work.

2. Hatra

The first Iraqi site to be inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1985, and the State Party has completed a lot of work in the field of protection and management. The site has been completely occupied by the forces of terror in mid-2014, as these forces have caused a lot of damage to the site, and as a result, in 2015 the site was inscribed on the list of danger, and after the site was liberated in 2017, many local committees visited the site and examined the damage of the site. Nevertheless, the State party’s request remains that the World Heritage Center to send a committee to assess the damage at the site, there have been many national and international undertakings to conduct protection, management and conservation work on the site, but there isn’t anything on the site.

At the beginning of February 2020, the site witnessed a visit by a team of experts from an Italian university and according to the agreement concluded with the Iraqi Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, and during the stay of that team for five days, the damages suffered by
the buildings at the site as a result of weathering factors were also documented. Terror forces (ISIS) at the site

![Image of damage](image.png)

**Fig. 1: Side of damage caused by forces of terror in the Temple of Al-Lat**

*(Source: Department of Antiquities of Nineveh, 2020)*

As a result of the damage to the site, an agreement has been made with the ALIPH organization (the International Alliance for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Conflict Areas) to carry out conservation work in the most affected areas of the site, and it has been determined to carry out conservation work in February of 2021 in cooperation with the archaeological cadres of the state board of antiquities and heritage.

By removing the threat of the forces of ISIS terrorism from the site, we look forward that World Heritage Committee to take a decision to remove the site from the list of danger after the threat of terrorism removed.

The weather conditions had a great impact on the buildings of the site, as the basic material in Hatra architecture is the use of limestone blocks, which were characterized by porosity and thus the penetration of water into the stones, where the humidity increased.
Table 1: Site within World Heritage

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<th>Name of the site</th>
<th>Year of inscription</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<td>Hatra</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>(ii)(iii)(iv)(vi)</td>
<td>The site was included in the danger list in 2015 after the site was occupied by ISIS, and after the site was liberated, the State party and the international community undertook with measures in the field of protection and management, including setting a site management plan and a comprehensive conservation plan. Therefore, the State party seeks to start implementing corrective measures and removing the effects of damage after occupying the site by ISIS for three years.</td>
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3. Ashur (Qalat Sherqat)

The city of Ashur is one of the most important historical cities whose news has occupied the ancient Near East accidents. The city located on the west bank of the Tigris River and 54 km north of the city of Sharqat and about 110 km south of the city of Mosul.

Ashur is the second historical site that Iraq attains the honor of being inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2003, but on the list of danger due to the presence of threats facing the site, the most important of which is the Makhoul Dam project. The State party carried out a lot of protection and management work on the site, but it did not match the size of the threats and dangers, so the site remained on the danger list.
Table 2: The site in the World Heritage List

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<td>2003</td>
<td>(ii)(iii)(iv)(vi)</td>
<td>The site was included on the World Heritage List in the year 2003 Iraq war, after that the site inscribed on the list of danger due to the presence of wars and the effects of the construction of Makhoul Dam on the site. Therefore, the site remained throughout that period on the danger list until the site was completely occupied by ISIS and after the site was liberated, the state party and the international community pledged to begin the protection and management measures at the site, and it is worth mentioning that the (ALIPH) organization has conserved the Tabira Gate, the most damaged landmark on the site as a result of its detonation by the terrorist forces. This work will contribute to stabilizing the landmarks and parts that are destined to fall after Ashur (Qalat Al Sharqat) became an advanced line of the military operations that took place in the region against ISIS terrorist gangs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The occupation of the site by the terrorist forces (ISIS) in mid-2014 had a great impact on the city and its monuments, as terrorists carried out many acts of damage, the last of which was the bombing and destruction of the largest landmark on the site, the Tabira Gate.
-Excavations and Conservation Works

The works on the site for this year were as follows;

Filling of the trench surrounding the Ziggurat of Ashur

The ziggurat of Ashur, bearing the temple of Ashur God in the ancient city, is considered the most important and prominent cultural landmark in the city. It is a solid mass of sun-dried mud of size (40 x 40 x 12 cm) built with a bonding material of pure clay, and it has a square-shaped base measuring (61 x 62) m. and semi-pyramid body, topped by a temple of Ashur God, the great goddess of the Assyrians. It is located in the northeastern part of the city, along the northern wall, opposite the al-Mashhalal Gate and overlooks Wadi Umm al-Chababit.

There are many tunnels that took place in the body of the ziggurat, as a result of archaeological excavations conducted by foreign archaeological expeditions, which expected that the body of the ziggurat contained many treasures.

These tunnels posed a great danger to the body of the ziggurat, especially in the winter season, where the severe erosion due to rain, so the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage decided to fill these tunnels and canyons that surround the ziggurat, and the trench filling process was completed on 18/1/2020. Thus, the base of the ziggurat is protected from the impact of rain.

-Conservation of Tabira Gate

Tabira Gate is one of the most important landmarks in the city of Ashur. It was discovered by the German expedition at the beginning of the twentieth century within thirteen gates intersecting the walls of the city of Ashur and located at the end of the northwestern side of the city walls, and it is one of the important establishments that the Assyrian king erected [Tukulti - Ninurta I 1244-1208 BC.] and renewed by the [Assyrian king [Tiglath -Pileser II 967-935 BC]]
Fig. 2 Tabira Gate before exploding by terror (ISIS)

(Source: Department of Antiquities of Sherqat, 2020)

The plan of the gate is summarized by building a platform made of mud brick in the form of a large bench measuring [26.5 x 21 m] to arrange the floor of the building with a height (8 courses) from the east (28 courses) from the west side, and above this platform a gate was erected.

The State Board of Antiquities and Heritage paid the city most of its attention, and the archaeological revival project of the city of Ashur in the 1980s is only evidence of that interest, as a lot of excavation and conservation work took place in the site.

Due to the importance of the Tabira Gate, the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage completed conserving of the gate in (1988), and it returned as a distinguished landmark in the city.

-Blowing up the gate by the forces of terror

The gate reached hand of vandalism that covered its entire body, as the sides of the brick walls fell and the brick casing fell from the inside to the northern tower. In the operation to liberate the city from the grip of terrorism, where the terrorist forces set out to blow up the gate, and severely damaged, and after liberating the site in mid-2017, the initial damage to the site was estimated and the damage was great.
Fig. 3: An image of the vandalism of the gate by ISIS.
(Source: Department of Antiquities of Sherqat, 2020)

Conservation of Tabira Gate / The first stage

The American University in Sulaymaniyah team/ Iraq - with the support of ALIPH - International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas, begin its first season of conservation to the Tabira gate. The parts that are due to fall as a result of the terrorist gangs detonating the shoulders that bear its three arches, so that the focus was as a first stage on the northern shoulder of the first arch in relation to entering the city because this arch had been more damaged than the other two arches.

The Sulaymaniyah University team prepared the required mud brick on site, and the four ovens of mud brick on the site were prepared, where the required mud brick was prepared too. The team successfully completed its first season, to be followed by subsequent conservation seasons.

It was a good opportunity for the team of the Department of Antiquities and Heritage of the American University in Sulaymaniyah to work in Ashur, and despite the short conservation season of (150) days, the university team pledged to resume work in Ashur again.
These are the conservation works that took place at site this year, and there are still many works that must be completed on the site in the field of protection and management.

4. Samarra Archaeological City

One of the major historical sites at the national and regional level is Samarra Archaeological City, which was included on the list of the World Heritage in Danger in 2007 and due to the presence of many threats facing the city and the severe shortage of protection and management work, so the city and throughout this period remained on the danger list.
With the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, the site was subjected to partial closure, and there were no conservation work on the site for this year. Therefore, work on the site was limited to taking partial closure measures and monitoring the site.

As for the works that took place on the site in 2020, they were as follows;

1- There was a violation of the boundaries of the Abu Delaf Mosque by farmers, and legal measures were taken against them and their violation stopped.

2- There was violation on the archaeological site of Asabian, located in the Jubairiyah area, where citizens built random residential homes and legal measures have been taken to stop the transgression.

3- There was an infringement on a part of the archaeological area surrounding the Palace of Decoration (Bait Al Zakherf). These works have been stopped and legal measures have been taken against the transgressors.

- The city within world heritage

Table 3: The city’s World Heritage site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of site</th>
<th>Year of inscription</th>
<th>criteria</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Samarra Archaeological City</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>(ii)(iii)(iv)</td>
<td>The inclusion of the city of Samarra on the list of danger came in a difficult circumstance that Iraq is going through in light of internal instability after the 2003 war. After that, the province of Salah al-Din fell into the hands of ISIS. The exploding the shrines of two imams has worsened the security situation. The State party seeks to initiate corrective measures as recommended</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Iraqi Marshes

The first mixed Iraqi site to be inscribed on the World Heritage List and represented a live interaction between man and his environment in all its manifestations.

The marshlands region, both natural and cultural, as the natural side, which is under supervision of ministry of water resources, as it manages the site and organizes what is related to the management of the environmental aspect of the site, and provides the World Heritage Committee with everything that happens on the site and the cultural side, which is under supervision of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site name</th>
<th>Year of inscriptions</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Ahwar of Southern Iraq</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>(iii)(v)(ix)(x)</td>
<td>Marshes are the first mixed Iraqi site to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, represented as human interaction with his environment since ancient times. The site needs a lot of work in the field of protection and management at the cultural and natural levels,</td>
</tr>
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</table>
including infrastructure facilities such as the Administration Unit Building and the Visitor Guidance Center.

The State party seeks to initiate corrective measures as recommended by the World Heritage Committee and to establish infrastructure facilities in the site.

The cultural side of the site represented by three sites: Ur, Eridu and Uruk, and these sites were due to the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic, so there was no work except in Ur and Uruk, where the three sites were partially closed.

**The work in the city of Ur**

The city of Ur was affected by COVID-19 epidemic a lot, as the site was closed and concentrating the state of control was tightened, and the Temple of Dab-Lal Mach and Ziggurat was surrounded by a BRC fence.

The State board of Antiquities heritage has also prepared, in cooperation with Un Ponte Per…. A plan to develop the site and turn it into sustainable archaeological site open to the visitors, whereby visitors' services and the parking of large and small wheels are transferred near the site's arriving point in order to protect the site and avoid any damage to its antiquities.

The proposed plan to develop the site includes the following points;

1-Sorting out a plot of land within the boundaries of the site and for erecting the visitor guidance center and to be within the plans through which the site is managed.

2- Modification and retrofitting of a public garage floor for buses and public cars for visitors, guests and employees.
- The city of Uruk

The site did not witness any excavation or conservation work for this year by the German expedition, but due to the presence of one of the landmarks discovered at the site, which is the stone building, which dates back to the late Uruk era (the fourth millennium BC) and is exposed to weathering factors and its occurrence in Lower area of the city of Uruk and the rain accumulates in it, which will affect the stability of the building and perhaps the building will collapse completely, and the German expedition had its intention to act and intervened to save the building, but the prevailing conditions due to COVID-19 epidemic had postponed taking any action in a timely manner. Therefore, the German expedition requested the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage to bury and cover the entire building with soil until the situation improves in the future, and to re-discover and conserve it. The building was documented before it was buried.

Fig. 6 The stone building in the city of Uruk before burial
(Source: Department of Antiquities of Muthanna, 2020)

6. City of Babylon

The city of Babylon is the last site that Iraq attains the honor of being inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2019, and the State Party made a lot of efforts over a period of three decades until the site was included on the list.
The old city of Babylon is one of the important tourist destinations at the national, regional and international levels before the listing process, so the listing process for the site on the World Heritage List will enhance the city’s site, and the state party intended to establish infrastructure facilities and adopt the principle of sustainable tourism.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Site name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Babylon</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>(iii)(vi)</td>
<td>The last Iraqi site to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, and if we followed the Babylon file, we would find the first tentative list of the site was in 1983, and many consulting bodies objected to the inclusion the site on the list due to the presence of a lot of conservation work outside the familiar range in the conserving of historical buildings, but Iraq returned the file again in order for the listing process to be completed in 2019, and during the site listing session that took place in Azerbaijan, the consulting bodies wanted to include the site on the danger list under the pretext that there were many errors in the conservation that took place at the site, but many delegations interfered and Iraq pressed, the site was included on the World Heritage List (without risk) The State party pledged, as stated by the Minister of culture, of effective measures on site in the field of protection and management, and the Iraqi Parliament approved the Babylon Law, The civilized capital of Iraq in 2017.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
-Work of conservation

WMF resumed its work in Babylon and after a long hiatus as a result of COVID-19 epidemic, as the organization’s team prepared the temple of Ninmah for scheduled conservation work for the end of this year.

The works that were completed in this temple were;

- Cleaning the room between the room and the sacred room (Cila) from debris and dust falling from the ceiling and wall.

![Fig. 7: Side of conservation work at the temple of Ninmah this year](Source: Department of Antiquities of Babylon, 2020)

- Leveling the floor of this room and making it ample for the movement of people and wheel-borrow in order to do conservation work.

- Spraying pesticides to eliminate the ground (termites)

- Carrying out the sorting process, for the mud brick from the others falling materials from the southern wall of Cela room, and it has been well preserved to ensure that it is not exposed to weather factors.

- Install metal supports and wooden structures under the walls prone to collapse of Cela room.
-Working in preserving channels for draining water from the roof, which will ensure that water does not collect in some areas of the roof.

-Removing and raising the old stairs that were built with bricks and cement, and erecting a new wooden staircase for the movement of workers inside the temple.

7. Conclusion

It became clear from state of conservation report that the protection and management work was limited to the lack of financial funding and the spread of COVID-19 epidemic. Therefore, hope remains on the World Heritage Center, and within the capacity building of the states parties to the convention is to hold more seminars and meetings (online) and send committees to assess the damage occurred in the sites.

We also ask and hope that the World Heritage Center will stand with us in order to develop solutions and remedies to remove the three sites of Iraq (Hatra, Ashur, and Samarra) from the danger list.

The State party is also to start implementing Makhoul Dam this year, so we ask the World Heritage Center for technical assistance in order to preserve the city of Ashur and the archaeological sites in Makhoul Dam basin.