

ICOMOS

**Report on the joint World Heritage Centre / ICOMOS
Advisory Mission to
Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage
Route, Bethlehem (C 1433)**

1st to 2nd September 2016



CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS	4
1 BACKGROUND TO THE MISSION	6
2 NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY	9
3 IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF ISSUES	10
4 ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE PROPERTY	14
5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	21
6 ANNEXES	23
1 Terms of Reference of the mission	24
2 Programme of the mission	26
3 Composition of the mission team	27
4 Maps of site and World Heritage property	28
5 Photographs and illustrations	30
APPENDICES	
A. Presentation on the Restoration of roof, windows and narthex of the Nativity Church in Bethlehem, by The Palestinian Presidential Committee (Prof. Claudio Alessandri)	
B. Presentation on the proposed projects within the World Heritage Site, by the Municipality of Bethlehem	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The mission team would like to thank the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities for arranging the programme for the visit, the Minister H. E. Rula May'a for chairing the briefing meeting on the first morning, to Dr Rjoob for coordinating the mission.

They were grateful for the opportunity to meet and to discuss issues concerning the World Heritage property with members of the Presidential Committee, H.E. Khouloud Daibes, Mr Imad Nassar and Mr Issa Murra, and with members of the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation, Mr Issam Juha and Fatin Lafi.

The mission team would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Bethlehem Municipality, and for the attendance of the Mayor, Ms Vera Baboun, in the first briefing meeting and the meeting concerning the new project proposals for the World Heritage property. They also thank Ms Enas Marzoqa for her constant support.

They are grateful to Prof Claudio Alessandri, the project manager, and to Giammarco Piacenti and his team for giving up their time to give us a guided tour of the works from the scaffold.

The mission team would also like to thank Tara Bushe and Regina Durighello of ICOMOS International Secretariat and the World Heritage Centre and namely Ms Nada Al Hassan, Chief of Arab States Unit, as well as the UNESCO Office in Ramallah for making the necessary arrangements for the mission.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage route in Bethlehem were the subject of an emergency nomination for inscription in January 2011, since they were considered to have greatly suffered from the lack of proper maintenance and repair because of the political situation in the area and region since 1967. In 2012, it was simultaneously inscribed on the World Heritage List, as well as on the List of World Heritage in Danger, and in 2015 the World Heritage Committee adopted a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) and corrective measures (40COM 7A.14).

The most important part of the repair programme – the repair of the roof trusses and the replacement of the roof coverings and rainwater disposal – is now complete, and the State Party requested the mission before the scaffold is removed so that the World Heritage Committee can consider taking the church off the List of World Heritage in Danger. The mission also offered an opportunity to discuss the contents of an Integrated Conservation Plan for the Church as requested by the World Heritage Committee, as well as an opportunity to view the wider World Heritage property – the Pilgrimage Route along Star Street leading to Manger Square and the Church of the Nativity – and the proposals for the proposed Manger Square tunnel and Manger Square Village.

The WHC/ICOMOS advisory mission's recommendations are as follows:

- 1 **The roof of the Church of the Nativity** and of the narthex is now in a sound condition, and the rainwater disposal system is functioning properly. The continuing programme of repairs is being carried out to high standards, with completion expected in 2019, subject to funding (40 COM 7A.14.3 and Corrective measures 39 COM 7A.28.3/4).
- 2 **The State of Conservation Reports** give a good record of the works that have been carried out and of their conservation policy. Nevertheless it would be desirable for the conservation policy in respect of the more recent works – mosaics, plaster, architraves, etc, to be sent to the WHC in advance of the works rather than after. Further details on the ongoing works, such as the repair of the internal wall plaster and the mosaic restoration (see Chapter 4, page 15), should be included in the next state of conservation report to be submitted by the State Party to the World Heritage Centre by 1 February 2017.
- 3 Nevertheless, there is a need to prepare a **Conservation Plan for the Church** (40 COM 7A.14.5 and Corrective measure 39 COM 7A.28.2) to record:
 - a) Systematized condition assessment that includes all existing condition recording surveys, analysis and historic documentation, including new knowledge gained during the project, specifically regarding the historic roof timbers and lead work of the roof (Corrective measure 39 COM 7A.28.1);
 - b) Identification of attributes which embody specific values according to the evolution of the ensemble and its character defining features;
 - c) Overarching conservation philosophy and specific principles for conservation interventions in accordance to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property and other relevant local values, including principles applied during the present works;
 - d) Costed and prioritised conservation action plan for all component parts of the architectural ensemble with a timeframe for implementation;
 - e) Additional measures for presentation, interpretation, environmental control, fire prevention, risk preparedness, maintenance and monitoring;
 - f) There is a need to build on the research that has been carried out during the project to build up a greater understanding of what fabric remains from the 6th century church, and of its original appearance.

- 4 **A Table of Contents for a Conservation Plan** has been suggested (see page 11) to meet the requirements of the World Heritage Committee Decision adopted in 2016. It would be appropriate that this should be completed by February 2018 for consideration by the World Heritage Committee in that year.
- 5 Immediate measures should be taken for the **prevention of fire**, and until complete dispositions are planned and put in place.
- 6 There is also a need for the preparation of a **Management Plan for the World Heritage property**, including the Church and the Pilgrimage route in its overall context at the heart of Bethlehem. This should be based on the Historic Urban Landscape approach to develop the management and conservation policies. It would be desirable that this should be completed, ideally, by February 2018 within the same timescale as the Conservation Plan for the Church, particularly in view of the development plans for Manger Square tunnel and Village.
- 7 The potential negative impacts on the World Heritage property of the **proposals for both the Manger Square Tunnel and for Manger Square Village** are of considerable concern. While the aim of freeing Manger Square of parking and through traffic is laudable, the proposals could impact on individual buildings in the Nativity complex (e.g. The Armenian Convent) and on the overall World Heritage property and its archaeology by creating a tunnel/ cutting under Manger street between the Church of the Nativity and the Manger Square that increases through traffic and creates an obstacle between the Church of the Nativity and Manger Square.
- 8 **These proposals should be halted** until a Traffic Management Plan, or a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, has been put in place, and solid justifications for their need have been made. One possible strategy could involve a car park at the roundabout at the start of Star Street, together with a further carpark on Manger Street to the north; this might obviate the need for the Manger Square Tunnel and Village, allowing the pedestrianisation of Manger Square and a smaller, more appropriately scaled, development in this location.
- 9 Future proposals guided by that Plan could then be considered and **Heritage Impact Assessments** prepared for each of them. Salvage excavations should be undertaken before a decision while any adopted project. Such proposed major interventions would need to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre, for review by ICOMOS and might need to be considered by the World Heritage Committee.
- 10 The transportation and movement within in the historic area of Bethlehem, including access to the Church of the Nativity and its surrounding, as well as lack of parking space are key issues and should be addressed as a priority through the development of clear and definite policies in a city-level **Traffic Management Plan, or a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan**. The mission welcomes the initiative of the Municipality to develop a mobility plan at Bethlehem city scale with technical support from the municipality of Paris.
- 11 In conclusion, and in light of the quality of the restoration works on major elements of the property including the roof of the Nativity Church, which address the major aspects of the corrective measures to meet the requested Desired State of Conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger, **the State Party may wish to request the World Heritage Committee for to remove the property from List of World Heritage in Danger if a detailed timetable can be agreed for the completion of the remaining Corrective Measures.**

1 BACKGROUND TO THE MISSION

Inscription history

The Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage route in Bethlehem were the subject of an emergency nomination for inscription in January 2011, since they were considered to have greatly suffered from the lack of proper maintenance and repair because of the political situation in the area and region since 1967, and from the difficulties in the provision of materials and equipment because of the lack of free movement during the Israeli occupation. In particular, serious rainwater ingress that had led to decay of the roof timbers and other historic fabric, including the wall mosaics, and the wall and column frescoes. In 2012, it was inscribed on the World Heritage List, and on the List of World Heritage in Danger simultaneously. In 2015 the World Heritage Committee adopted a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) and corrective measures as follows:

1. Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger:

Completed conservation and repair of the roof structure of the Church of the Holy Nativity

2. Corrective measures:
 - a) Complete a full investigative survey of the historic timbers and lead work of the roof, identifying the age and historical significance of the various component parts.
 - b) Develop a Conservation Plan that synthesis the conclusions of the detailed investigative survey into a clear statement of the significances of the various elements of the roof within a comprehensive conservation philosophy for the roof restoration project.
 - c) Prepare a detailed project specification for the roof repairs that allow a full understanding of which elements of the roof will be maintained, which repaired and which replaced.
 - d) Undertake the roof repair project, including stabilising the vaults of the Narthex, and document its interventions.

Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (adopted at 37th session of the World Heritage Committee)

Brief Synthesis

Bethlehem lies 10 kilometres south of the city of Jerusalem, in the fertile limestone hill country of the Holy Land. Since at least the 2nd century AD people have believed that the place where the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem, now stands is where Jesus was born. One particular cave, over which the first Church was built, is traditionally believed to be the Birthplace itself. In locating the Nativity, the place both marks the beginnings of Christianity and is one of the holiest spots in Christendom. The original basilica church of 339 AD (St Helena), parts of which survive below ground, was arranged so that its octagonal eastern end surrounded, and provided a view of the cave. This church is overlaid by the present Church of the Nativity, essentially of the mid-6th century AD (Justinian), though with later alterations. It is the oldest Christian church in daily use[11]. Since early medieval times the Church has been increasingly incorporated into a complex of other ecclesiastical buildings, mainly monastic. As a result, today it is embedded in an extraordinary architectural ensemble, overseen by members of the

Greek Orthodox Church, the Custody of the Holy Land and the Armenian Church, under the provisions of the Status Quo of the Holy Places established by the Treaty of Berlin (1878).

During various periods over the past 1700 years, Bethlehem and the Church of the Nativity have been, and still are, a pilgrim destination. The eastern end of the traditional route from Jerusalem to the Church, known as the Pilgrimage route, marks the road that connects the traditional entrance of Bethlehem, near King David's Wells with the Church of the Nativity, and extends along the Star Street through the Damascus Gate, or Qos Al-Zarara, the historical gate of the town, towards the Manger Square. The Route continues to be celebrated as the path followed by Joseph and Mary during their trip in Bethlehem during Christmas ceremonies each year, and is followed ceremonially by Patriarchs of the three churches at their several Christmases, and during their official visits to Bethlehem.

The outstanding universal value of the Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem, lies, in its association with the birthplace of the founder of a great religion, which for Believers saw the Son of God made man in Bethlehem.

And for the way the fabric of the Church of the Nativity and its associations have combined to reflect the extraordinary influence of Christianity in spiritual and political terms over 1500 years.

Criterion (iv): *The Church of the Nativity is an outstanding example of an early church in a remarkable architectural ensemble; which illustrates two significant stages in human history in the 4th-6th centuries AD the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity, which led to the development of the Church of the Nativity on the site believed to be associated with the birth of Jesus; and to the power and influence of Christianity in the period of the Crusades that led to the embellishment of the Church of the Nativity and the development of three major convents in its environs.*

Criterion (vi): *The Church of the Nativity, and the Pilgrimage Route to it, are directly associated with the birth of Jesus, an event of outstanding universal significance, through the buildings of which were constructed in the 4th century AD and re-constructed in the 6th century AD. These are a strong symbol for more than 2 billion Christian believers in the world; and are Holy to Christians as well as to Muslims.*

[...]

Examination of the state of conservation by the World Heritage Committee

In 2016, the World Heritage Committee adopted the following Decision 40COM 7A.14:

1. *Having examined Document WHC/16/40.COM/7A.Add;*
2. *Recalling Decision 39 COM 7A.28, adopted at its 39th session (Bonn 2015);*
3. *Notes that conservation works for the roof of the Church of the Nativity have been completed and acknowledges the progress made in addressing conservation conditions at the architectural ensemble and the rehabilitation works undertaken at other areas in the property;*
4. *Also notes that a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory mission will be carried out at the property and will allow evaluating the restoration works that have been carried out at the Church of the Nativity, and discussing with the State Party the contents of an Integrated Conservation Plan for past and future interventions;*
5. *Requests the State Party to develop the Integrated Conservation Plan, as per the adopted corrective measures, which should include in one synthetic document, among other items, the following:*
 - a) *Systematized condition assessment that includes all existing condition recording surveys, analysis and historic documentation;*

- b) *Identification of attributes which embody specific values according to the evolution of the ensemble and its character defining features;*
 - c) *Overarching conservation philosophy and specific principles for conservation interventions in accordance to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property and other relevant local values;*
 - d) *Costed and prioritised conservation action plan for all component parts of the architectural ensemble with a timeframe for implementation;*
 - e) *Additional measures for presentation, interpretation, environmental control, fire prevention, risk preparedness, maintenance and monitoring;*
6. *Also requests to the State Party to prioritize and secure the necessary resources for the development of the Management Plan for the property and to provide an electronic and three printed copies of the Plan for review by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies;*
 7. *Reiterates its request to the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, for review by the Advisory Bodies, concept proposals for the Manger Square Tunnel and the Manger Square village before plans are finalised or commitments made to their implementation;*
 8. *Further notes the request made by the State Party to remove the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger but considers that the planned Advisory mission will allow discussing this request with the State Party to ensure full implementation of the corrective measures before the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger;*
 9. *Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2017, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 41st session in 2017;*
 10. *Decides to retain Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem (Palestine) on the List of World Heritage in Danger.*

Justification of the mission

The most important part of the repair programme – the repair of the roof trusses and the replacement of the roof coverings and rainwater disposal – is now complete, and the State Party requested the mission before the scaffold is removed so that the World Heritage Committee can consider taking the church off the List of World Heritage in Danger. The mission also offered an opportunity to discuss the contents of an Integrated Conservation Plan for the Church as requested by the World Heritage Committee, as well as an opportunity to view the wider World Heritage property – the Pilgrimage Route along Star Street leading to Manger Square and the Church of the Nativity – and the proposals for the proposed Manger Square tunnel and Manger Square Village.

Terms of Reference of the joint UNESCO WHC / ICOMOS mission

The detailed Terms of Reference for the mission and the programme are provided in Annexes 6.1 and 6.2.

2 NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY

Protected area legislation and Institutional framework

The Pilgrimage Route, principally Star Street, is part of the Municipality of Bethlehem and is therefore covered by the provisions of 'Building and Planning Law 30, 1996', of 'the 'Bethlehem Charter 2008', of the 'Guidelines for the Conservation and Rehabilitation of the Historic Towns of Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour, 2010, and of the 'General Rules for the Protection of the Historic Area and Historic Individual Buildings, Bethlehem, 2006'. Protection', 'Conservation', and 'Rehabilitation' are the stated objectives of the last two enactments, and the 'Charter', which embodies a statement of principles as well as working practices to achieve those objectives. This area is now an Area under Planning, and any interventions are forbidden until the adoption of the conservation and management plan and the bylaws that have been prepared by the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation (CCHP) in cooperation with Bethlehem Municipality and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA).

Management Structure

The Church of the Nativity is managed under the terms and provisions of the '*Status Quo of the Holy Places*', which is implemented by the three churches occupying the place; the Greek Orthodox Church, the Custody of the Holy Land and the Armenian Patriarchate. The management is currently supplemented by an advisory committee formed by the Palestinian President. Each of the three adjacent Convents is maintained under its own arrangement: the Armenian Convent is controlled by the Armenian Patriarchate in the Holy City of Jerusalem; the Greek Orthodox Convent by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in the Holy City of Jerusalem; and the Franciscan Convent and the Church of St Catherine by the Custody of the Holy Land, Holy City of Jerusalem.

The municipality of Bethlehem and the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation in Bethlehem, in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Ministry of Local Government have prepared a Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan, implemented under the Heritage for Development Project funded by the European Commission and published by UNESCO in 2012. This includes bylaws for intervention within the historic town, a management plan for the historic town and a manual for interventions endorsed by Bethlehem municipality. In addition, the team of the municipality is involved in the planning process, and is expected to have the full capacity for the handling of the outputs of the project.

Response to the recognition of values under international treaties and programmes

The Palestinian Authorities are keen to sustain the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the World Heritage property as inscribed by the World Heritage Committee, and to receive advice to that end.

3 IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF ISSUES

Management

The works at the Church of the Nativity are being carried out under the aegis of the Presidential Committee set up by President Mahmoud Abbas in conjunction with the three ecclesiastical owners – the Greek Orthodox Church, the Custody of the Holy Land and the Armenian Patriarchate – to oversee the repair programme. This structure will continue until the completion of the comprehensive programme of repairs to the church that is expected in 2019.

The management of the World Heritage property, its buffer zone and wider setting is an aspect of the overall management of planning exercised by the Bethlehem Municipality, with guidance from the Ministry of Tourism and Development and the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation (CCHP).

A Bethlehem Area Conservation Management Plan was completed in 2012 with the support from UNESCO, but there is as yet no Conservation Plan for the Church of the Nativity, nor is there a World Heritage property Management Plan in place. The management of the Church following completion is still to be agreed. In this regard, an international assistance of circa 30 000 USD to prepare the management plan for the property has been recently approved.

Factors affecting the property

The Church was inscribed on an emergency basis in 2012 on the List of World Heritage in Danger, on account of the poor condition of the roof and roof coverings and the consequent rainwater penetration that was causing serious decay to the roof trusses and boarding, and in view of the problems caused by the lack of maintenance during the 2000 Intifada. Three years' preparation by an Italian team allowed the completion of tender documentation. An international tendering process, the first carried out by the Palestinian Authorities, led to the appointment of Piacenti, a conservation contractor based in Prato in Italy.

The original programme has now been completed – the repair of the roof, the strengthening and rebuilding of the narthex roof, and the replacement of the windows – and the church is now in sound condition as regards the primary factors leading to decay. The programme has been extended to include the repointing of the external stonework, the conservation of the narthex doors, the painted columns, the internal plaster work and the mosaics, including the uncovering and restoration of mosaics that had been lost below the plaster. These works should be completed during 2017, with further works to other areas – e.g. the 4th century Constantinean floor mosaics, improved lighting, fire detection and prevention, environmental controls, risk preparedness and interpretation - to follow until 2019.

Conservation Plan for the Church

The need is therefore now to prepare a Conservation Plan for the Church, its management and maintenance, as required by the World Heritage Committee in 2016, Decision 40 COM 7A.14. During the mission, the Palestinians expressed puzzlement at the requirement, initially requested by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session in 2015 (Decision 39 COM 7A.28), in view of the extensive documentation that had been produced in their State of Conservation Report dated February 2016, incorporating the quarterly Construction Progress reports during the course of the project. It is true that much of the historical account is given in the State of Conservation reports, incorporating the new knowledge that derives from the researches enabled by the works programme, including further detailed archaeological analysis, some dendrochronology and identification of species. Nevertheless,

there is still a need to bring this together to show the evidence on which this work was based, the decisions made, and the precise work undertaken to minimise interventions to historic fabric, as an accessible record for the future.

The Decision 39 COM 7A.28 requested the State Party “to provide to the World Heritage Centre, for review by the Advisory bodies, a comprehensive conservation plan for the murals, the facades and the Narthex should any works be foreseen thereon.” However, no details were sent in advance of these additional works being undertaken. It is unfortunate that this was not done, as an agreed Conservation Plan could have been prepared before these works commenced, since they were not constrained by the emergency that led to the bringing forward of the roof works. The roofing works were an exceptional circumstance, and in future details of all proposed major work should be set out, justified and agreed before they commence.

The purpose of the Conservation Plan is twofold: first to document the work carried out, to explain the evidence on which it was based and the conservation approaches and decisions that were made to ensure minimal impact on historic fabric and on the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), and secondly to set over-arching conservation policies to guide future interventions that are readily available to all who work on the building. In this context, it is essential that the plan is based on adequate knowledge of all remaining 6th century fabric, together with the known dates of fabric reflecting subsequent interventions, and that this evidence is readily known and understood by all who are involved in conservation work. A Conservation Plan Methodology was suggested. This would outline the history of fabric of the church, its OUV and the attributes of OUV, the conservation issues affecting the church, policies for meeting them that will respect fabric related to the attributes, a costed action plan and programme for implementation, recording and future monitoring. A suggested Table of Contents follows:

Conservation Plan for the Church of the Nativity: suggested table of contents	
1.00	Outline of historical development in relation to the surviving fabric
	The birthplace of Jesus - 1 st century
	The Constantinean church - 4 th century
	The Justinian church - 6 th century
	The Crusader period - 11 th century
	Later alterations - 12 th -21 st century
2.00	Outstanding Universal Value
	Attributes of OUV that need to be conserved
	Including:
	Archaeological
	Floor mosaics
	Wall mosaics
	Architrave and column carving and paintings
3.00	Issues and policies: condition of fabric
	Roof trusses and roof coverings
	Rainwater disposal
	Narthex vaults and roof
	Narthex doors
	Wall mosaic and plaster
	Stone facades and pointing (external and internal)
	Architrave and column paintings
	Floor mosaics

4.00	Issues and policies: technical requirements and installations
	Fire prevention, detection and protection
	Seismic protection
	Electrical/ Lighting (external and internal)
	Environmental conditions (humidity, ventilation)
5.00	Costed action plan and programme and implementation
	Recording
	Monitoring

This format would allow appropriate response to the corrective measures adopted by the world Heritage Committee at its 39th session in 2015 and subsequent requests at its 40th session in 2016.

2015 - Decision 39 COM 7A.28:

6. *Also requests the State Party to provide to the World Heritage Centre, for review by the Advisory bodies, a comprehensive conservation plan for the murals, the facades and the Narthex should any works be foreseen thereon;*

2016 - Decision 40COM 7A.14 (in relation to item 5):

5.1 The archaeological reports, technical reports etc., which have already been assembled as appendices to the February 2016 comprehensive State of Conservation Report, could be attached as annexes, with a summary in the main Plan.

5.2 The identification of attributes which convey OUV should be included (section 2.00).

5.3 The overarching conservation policy and specific principles for conservation interventions, for work already undertaken and for future work, should be set out in the conservation policies section (section 3.00).

5.4 The costed and prioritised action plan should be included as the final section of the report (section 5.00).

5.5 Additional measures for presentation, interpretation, environmental control, fire prevention, risk preparedness, maintenance and monitoring could be covered in the conservation and management issues and policies sections. (section 4.00).

The Palestinian authorities are very anxious that the completion of a Conservation Plan for the Church should not prevent the removal of the Church from the List of World Heritage in Danger. In view of the completion of the repairs to the roofs and rainwater disposal, and of the ongoing programme of repairs and conservation to the interior of the church, a timetable should be set and agreed for the preparation of the plan. A submission by the 1 February 2018 would allow examination by the World Heritage Committee that year, before completion of the programme of repairs.

World Heritage property Management Plan

In view of the emergency inscription of the Church of the Nativity in 2012 and the emphasis on repairs to the church roof to prevent rainwater ingress, no progress has yet been made on the preparation of a World Heritage property Management Plan for the Church and for the wider area including the Pilgrim Route along Star Street, Manger Square and the buffer zone. However, an International Assistance of 30 000 USD has been recently granted to the State Party to prepare this Management

Plan to set out the management structure and responsibilities for managing the attributes of OUV and other attributes that could impact adversely on the property, and to define policies/strategies to address interpretation, access, tourism, traffic management, development, risk preparedness, etc. The Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan was completed in 2012, including a very useful mapping exercise recording the plan and uses of all buildings in the area. A great deal of work has already been done in improving the paving and signage, and in repairs to buildings flanking the road, but this has not been undertaken within any agreed framework.

It would seem appropriate, in view of the current proposals for major works affecting the World Heritage property, to complete the World Heritage property Management Plan in the same timescale as the preparation of the Church of the Nativity Conservation Plan, i.e. ideally by February 2018, for examination by the World Heritage Committee that year. This would allow appropriate management policies to be put in place for access, visitor movement and car parking to inform developing ideas for the re-invigoration of Star Street, the pedestrianisation of Manger Square, and the development of the Armenian Patriarchate car park.

4 ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE PROPERTY

In 2008 a Presidential Committee for the Restoration of the Church of the Nativity was established by Presidential decree. The design package was completed in 2011 and tendered to four international contractors. The specialised Italian contractor Piacenti was awarded the contract for the first stage – renovation of the roof and windows – in July 2013. The project manager was CDG and consortium. Subsequent donations have allowed the contract to be extended to include the restoration of the narthex, the narthex east wooden doors, the external stone facades, internal wall plastering, wall mosaics, basilica metal doors and the wooden architraves over the colonnade. The state of conservation is now as follows.

Church roof trusses and boarding (Fig 5.2)

The repairs to the roof trusses and roof boarding are now complete. It was possible for the mission to view the trusses at close quarters from the internal scaffold, and their repair is well documented in the Quarterly State of Conservation Reports. The decision was made to cut off the severely decayed ends of the trusses where built into the damp wall, and to connect new timber ends by means of resin-fixed steel bars, an appropriate means of retaining the maximum of original timber. Similarly, with the roof boarding only severely decayed boards were replaced, and the location of roof boarding repairs, as with the truss repairs, is well recorded on marked up drawings.

What is less clear is the analysis of the age, and therefore of the significance, of the roof, and the mission was not able to obtain a clear answer to the fundamental question as to whether the form, and which parts of the fabric, of the present roof is 6th century or dates from a later period of rebuilding, of which there are many recorded in the archaeological report. There are references in the archaeological report to historical and dendrochronological studies: *The timber structures in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem: Typologies and diagnosis*, *Journal of Cultural Heritage (2012)*, di Nicola Macchioni, Michele Brunetti, Benedetto Pizzo, Paolo Burato, Michela Nocetti, Sabrina Palanti. *About the dating of wooden structures, refer to Massimo Mannucci dating report, 2014*. The mission has not been able to obtain these papers which might shed light on this question.

Given the extreme importance of the church in relation to the early history of Christianity, a clear understanding of how its fabric relates to this history is crucial. The SoOUV states that: “This church [the original one] is overlaid by the present Church of the Nativity, essentially of the mid-6th century AD (Justinian), though with later alterations. It is the oldest Christian church in daily use”. It is clearly necessary to be able to understand, as precisely as possible, which parts are from the 6th century and which reflect later alterations.

It would appear necessary that further dendrochronological studies should be carried out in future to investigate this question further, if the necessary information is not available in current publications. It is also necessary to ensure that this information is readily available. The disposition of 6th century fabric must form the basis of a Conservation Plan.

The church is in an area of seismic activity, and steel ties have been added between the ends of the trusses and the masonry walls, in order to give adequate protection to the church in the event of earthquake, as ascertained in a detailed scientific report.

Church external roof finishes and rainwater drainage (Fig 5.3, 5.4)

The repairs to the roof finishes and rainwater drainage are now complete. The previous roof consisted of 3.5 to 7mm lead sheets, laid on a layer of clay and straw. The roof had been covered in recent years with a thick layer of bitumen covered with a layer of tissue saturated with resin, punctured in places, and the rainwater outlets were blocked, causing the rainwater penetration that led to the emergency

inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger. These layers have now been entirely removed, the boards repaired on the principal of minimum replacement (8%). Samples of the roof boards and of the clay and straw should be retained for further analysis. A new build-up has then been applied consisting of plywood fixed to the boarding (intended to give bracing), and a new ventilated lead roof on gap-edge boards covered with 2mm lead sheet with standing seams vertically, and welted joints horizontally. At the parapet abutments, the original rainwater drainage holes have been re-opened, and lead shoots constructed to shed water clear of the walls. This is all well executed and effective, though a thicker gauge of lead would have had been desirable to provide a longer life.

Clerestory windows (Fig 5.5)

These had all been replaced in the 19th century and were in a poor condition, and the decision was made to replace them all. The new windows are outward opening casements, made of cypress, and their replacement is complete.

Narthex roof repairs and strengthening (Fig 5.6)

The narthex roof was originally a lean-to timber roof, as evidenced by the holes in the west wall roof the nave, but was replaced later with a vaulted roof. This was inadequately tied, causing the west gable wall to lean outwards. The infilling above the vaults has been removed under archaeological supervision (some interesting material was found), and a new steel roof constructed within the depth of the former vault infill, from which the vaults have been hung by means of stainless steel hangers. Above the new steel roof, lined with a new waterproof membrane, the paved roof has been rebuilt in facsimile, numbering paving stones and re-laying them in their original positions. Three access hatches give access to the space between the top of the vaults and the underside of the new steel roof. This work is now completed to a high standard.

The narthex east wooden doors (Fig 5.7)

During conservation of the narthex doors further carved panels were uncovered below the plank facing. These have also been conserved, and this work is now complete.

The external stone facades (Fig 5.8)

The elevations of the church above the level of the aisle roofs have had their modern cement pointing cut out and they have been repointed in a sympathetic gritty lime mortar. The repointing and repair of the lower level elevations will follow the removal of the external roof scaffold.

The internal wall plastering

Work is continuing on the repair of the internal wall plaster, including grouting behind loose plaster and cutting out and replacing areas of earlier patched cement mortar repair. This work should be complete by October 2016. Further details of the composition of the grouting, the use of lime mortar, and any reference to mortars previously used in the church should be included in the next state of conservation report to be submitted by the State Party to the World Heritage Centre by 1 February 2017.

The wall mosaics (Fig 5.9- 5.12)

The wall mosaics dating from the Crusader period in the 12th century are one of the most significant artistic features of the church. Analysis has been carried out to ascertain the existence of mosaics hidden behind the plaster, and in this manner a fine mosaic has been identified and uncovered above the nave arcade. The mosaics are undergoing a programme of cleaning, consolidating and restoring the legibility of key elements of the work, notably the faces of the figures where these have been lost.

The restoration has been carried out using plaster carefully painted to simulate the colour and the design of the lost elements, based on those that survive elsewhere in the church and in other contemporary churches, such as those in Sicily. When finished the repair works will establish the mosaics among the finest of their period. This work should be complete by October 2016. Further details of the mosaic restoration should be included in the next state of conservation report to be submitted by the State Party to the World Heritage Centre by 1 February 2017.

The basilica metal doors

Repair is complete, but the mission was not able to view the completed work, and cannot therefore comment.

The nave columns (Fig 5.13)

The nave columns are painted and have extensive wall paintings. They were extremely dirty, and are in the process of being cleaned and conserved.

The wooden architraves over the colonnade (Fig 5.15, 5.16)

The wooden architraves, or facing planks to the beams that span the length of the arcade, are heavily carved and clogged with paint of modern vintage. The paint has been largely stripped to reveal the quality of the carving. This work should be complete by October 2016.

Additional measures

Proposals for additional measures for presentation, interpretation, environmental control, ventilation, fire prevention, lighting, risk preparedness, maintenance and monitoring are intended but have not yet been prepared. In particular, it is intended to better reveal and interpret the 4th century Constantinean mosaics below the nave floor (Fig 5.14), which are believed to extend more widely than is currently apparent. Proposals will have to be very carefully considered.

Fire has erupted on various occasions in the church, due to the use of candles in the various church rites, including in the underground manger grotto. Immediate measures should be taken for the prevention of fire, and until complete dispositions are planned and put in place to avoid a major hazard. In particular, use of candles should be banned in the Manger grotto, and all materials displayed in the grotto should be replaced with unflammable materials.

Progress Made in the Achievement of the Desired States of Conservation

Concerning the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger, and taking into due consideration the decision of the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session (Decision 39 COM 7A.28), which adopted that Desired State of Conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger is: "Completed conservation and repair of the roof structure of the Church of the Holy Nativity" and in light of the assessment by the Mission of the subsequent Corrective measures, also adopted by the Committee in consultation with the State Party, as follows:

- I. Complete a full investigative survey of the historic timbers and lead work of the roof, identifying the age and historical significance of the various component parts.***

Damaged and repaired roof trusses were documented. When a decision was made to cut off the severely decayed ends of the trusses, appropriate means were ensured to retain the maximum of original timber. Similarly, with the roof boarding only severely decayed boards were replaced, and

the location of roof boarding repairs, as with the truss repairs, is well recorded on marked up drawings. However, what is less clear is the analysis of the age, and therefore of the significance, of the roof, and the mission was not able to obtain a clear answer to the fundamental question as to whether the form, and which parts of the fabric, of the present roof is 6th century or dates from a later period of rebuilding, of which there are many recorded in the archaeological report of the State Party. Dendrochronological studies refer to timbers contemporary with Haghia Sophia, ie of the sixth century, but the archival record suggests major interventions at different dates, a fire and a rebuilding by the Venetians. It would appear necessary that further dendrochronological studies should be carried out in future to investigate this question further, if the necessary information is not available in current publications.

II. *Develop a Conservation Plan that synthesis the conclusions of the detailed investigative survey into a clear statement of the significances of the various elements of the roof within a comprehensive conservation philosophy for the roof restoration project.*

During the mission, the Palestinian Authorities expressed puzzlement at the requirement, initially requested by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session in 2015 (Decision 39 COM 7A.28), in view of the extensive documentation that had been produced in their State of Conservation Report dated February 2016, incorporating the quarterly Construction Progress reports during the course of the project. It is true that much of the historical account is given in the State of Conservation reports, incorporating the new knowledge that derives from the researches enabled by the works programme, including further detailed archaeological analysis, some dendrochronology and identification of species. Nevertheless, there is still a need to bring this together to show the evidence on which this work was based, the decisions made, and the precise work undertaken to minimise interventions to historic fabric, as an accessible record for the future. A Conservation Plan Methodology for the Church, its management and maintenance, as required by the World Heritage Committee in 2016, Decision 40 COM 7A.14. was suggested by the Mission and is attached. The State Party is currently working on the preparation of this Plan in view of its submission to the forthcoming session of the World Heritage Committee.

III. *Prepare a detailed project specification for the roof repairs that allow a full understanding of which elements of the roof will be maintained, which repaired and which replaced.*

The roof repairs have been undertaken and completed according to high standards. Comprehensive recording of the repairs has been carried out to document the claim that repairs were carried out according to the principle of minimum intervention as regards the historic fabric, as set out in the State of Conservation report; however, a new ventilated roof has been provided above the historic roof in order to give better long-term protection. A summary account of the historic development of the repairs and the repair methodology, should be included in the Conservation Management Plan for the Church.

IV. *Undertake the roof repair project, including stabilising the vaults of the Narthex, and document its interventions*

The Mission considers that the repairs to the roof trusses and roof boarding as well as the stabilisation of the vaults of the Narthex are now complete and have been carried out according to high standards.

New project proposals within the World Heritage Property and its buffer zone

1. Star Street (Fig 5.17)

On the second day in Bethlehem, the mission walked the Pilgrim Route along Star Street, the main road leading from the direction of Jerusalem, starting at the Action Club Roundabout. It is clear that a great deal of repair work has taken place to the buildings flanking the road and to the stone paving of the road surface in the last 20 years, largely funded by American grants. There is a well restored and well run Hosh Al Syrian (Fig 5.18 & 5.19), or traditional hotel, and an impressive reconstruction of a vaulted building that had collapsed. One of the buildings is now used as a Tourist Information Centre with a glass workshop on the upper floor above. Yet commercial life has still to return properly to Star Street following the 2000 Intifada when most owners moved their shops elsewhere, and many of the shops are closed up. Behind the buildings there are potentially attractive small terraces enjoying extensive views to the east, currently under- or un-used.

The problem is that most visitors or pilgrims come as part of day coach tours from Jerusalem. Visitors are dropped off from a coach in Manger Square and spend little time, and therefore little money, in Bethlehem. The mission was told that the city authorities intend to create a new coach drop-off point and a new car park at the north end of Star Street, so that both visitors and pilgrims walk the pilgrim route to the Church of the Nativity. This would enhance both the visitor anticipation and the visitor experience. It would also potentially transform the viability of the shops on Star Street, allowing a longer dwell-time and a greater tourist spend to support the maintenance and improvement of the World Heritage property.

The situation in Star street raises the issue of the overall urban management of the Bethlehem Old City Centre, which has been largely deserted by the original inhabitants who immigrated or left their houses un-inhabited. A rehabilitation project for Star Street would need to address issues related to property and heredity laws, economic and social incentives to repopulate the city centre and re-exploit the shops, such as restoration subsidies and appropriate social and infrastructure services in the Old City Centre. The Management Plan should therefore address the rehabilitation of Star Street in its broader urban, economic and social context.

2. Manger Square

Manger Square was created by demolitions in the post-War period, and archaeological investigation has revealed remains of Ottoman period buildings below the Square. Remains were also uncovered during the excavations for the Bethlehem Peace Centre, and some of them are revealed in a small museum below the building (the mission was not able to see this museum). The Square is flanked by several new municipal buildings constructed in the local stone, if not quite in accordance with the local vernacular. Despite having been stone paved and pedestrianised in the year 1999, the Square suffers from being used in a slightly chaotic manner for car-parking during the week.

3. Manger Square Tunnel project (Fig 5.20, 5.21, 5.22)

The Manger Square tunnel is proposed to solve the parking problem in the Square, and to allow vehicles arriving at the Square from the north to cross the Square via a 4m deep cutting under Manger Street between the Church of the Nativity and the Manger Square and close to the wall of the Armenian Church, with bridges spanning the tunnel on the line of approach to the Church of the

Nativity to the north and along the line of Milk Grotto Street to the south. The cutting/ tunnel is intended to lead to a major new building and multi-storey car park on the site of the Armenian Patriarchate surface car-park to the SW of Manger Square, known as future Manger Square Village. The justification of a tunnel in Manger Square with an overview of traffic management at the level of the City should be at the origin of any project in this area. However, such a study has not been made available for the mission. Nevertheless, the mission was informed about and welcomes the initiative of the Municipality to develop a mobility plan at Bethlehem city scale with technical support from the municipality of Paris. The mission is confident that the outcome of this study will inform a sustainable urban mobility plan, which should take into due consideration the OUV of the World Heritage property and its physical attributes. The plan should explore all options available before a decision is made on the inevitability of the proposed tunnel.

There appear to be major problems with the proposal and there could be serious negative impacts on the World Heritage property:

1. To make a cutting 4m deep directly in front of the Armenian Convent is likely to have a major archaeological impact.
2. It could also risk the stability of the Armenian Convent.
3. The effect of the tunnel and bridges would be to create a barrier separating the Church of the Nativity and the adjacent Franciscan, Greek Orthodox and Armenian monasteries from Manger Square and from the approach along the Pilgrim Route.
4. It is not clear that the width of the roadway proposed would allow any pedestrian access to the Square to Manger Square from north and south on either side of the tunnel.
5. Even if Manger Square were closed to parking, vehicles would still need to access Manger Square, and would have to do so via the NE corner of the Square, cutting across the pedestrian entrance to Manger Square from Star Street, since the road entering the Square from the SE would only lead to the tunnel.
6. A primary concern is that the provision of a tunnel would exacerbate the traffic and parking problems in Bethlehem by encouraging through traffic and traffic crossing Manger Square in order to reach the proposed Manger Square Village car park, without reducing pressure on Manger Square itself.

Manger Square Village project (Fig 5.20 to 5.28).

The land falls away steeply to the north and south of Manger Square, and the sloping site to the SW of Manger Square is occupied by a surface carpark on land owned by the Armenian Patriarchate located in the buffer zone of the World Heritage property. The proposal is to cut into the hillside with a six-storey vertical cutting with a further four stories above the level of Milk Grotto Street, requiring the demolition of the Ottoman period building on the corner of Milk Grotto and Manger streets. The building would contain a four-storey underground car park entered from the bottom of the site, surmounted by six floors of office and retail development with publicly accessible roof terraces.

There appear to be major difficulties with the proposal and there could be serious negative impacts on the World Heritage property:

1. To make a cutting 12m deep close to the Armenian Convent is likely to have a significant archaeological impact.
2. It could also risk the stability of the Armenian Convent.
3. The large scale and height of the building would greatly exceed the grain and scale of other buildings in Bethlehem.

4. A major carpark and retail magnet in this location could create unnecessary traffic crossing Manger Square and undesirable competition with shops in the Old City Centre, thus compromising its social and economic revitalisation and conservation.
5. Therefore, the mission considers that proposed project design should be revised with respect to the Church of the Nativity and its surrounding historic ensemble, including the Armenian Convent, as the historic landmarks, and to a smaller and more appropriately scaled design. A Heritage Impact Assessment and salvage excavations should be undertaken and submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by ICOMOS before any irreversible decision is adopted.

Car park provision in Bethlehem

A coordinated Traffic Management Strategy is needed urgently which should justify and frame any detailed proposals. One strategy would be to promote the World Heritage property and the Pilgrim Route by making the creation of a carpark on the roundabout at the entrance to Star Street a top priority, accompanied by an insistence on coach drop-off in this location. This might obviate the need for the Manger Square tunnel (the completion of the ring road should reduce the need for through-traffic from east to west and vice versa). It would also promote the shops and hotels in the Old City Centre including along Star Street and might obviate the need for the building of Manger Square Village, at least on its presently intended scale.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The WHC/ICOMOS advisory mission's recommendations are as follows:

- 1 **The roof of the Church of the Nativity** and of the narthex is now in a sound condition, and the rainwater disposal system is functioning properly. The continuing programme of repairs is being carried out to high standards, with completion expected in 2019, subject to funding (40 COM 7A.14.3 and Corrective measures 39 COM 7A.28.3/4).
- 2 **The State of Conservation Reports** give a good record of the works that have been carried out and of their conservation policy. Nevertheless it would be desirable for the conservation policy in respect of the more recent works – mosaics, plaster, architraves, etc, to be sent to the WHC in advance of the works rather than after. Further details on the ongoing works, such as the repair of the internal wall plaster and the mosaic restoration (see Chapter 4, page 15), should be included in the next state of conservation report to be submitted by the State Party to the World Heritage Centre by 1 February 2017.
- 3 Nevertheless, there is a need to prepare a **Conservation Plan for the Church** (40 COM 7A.14.5 and Corrective measure 39 COM 7A.28.2) to record:
 - a) Systematized condition assessment that includes all existing condition recording surveys, analysis and historic documentation, including new knowledge gained during the project, specifically regarding the historic roof timbers and lead work of the roof (Corrective measure 39 COM 7A.28.1);
 - b) Identification of attributes which embody specific values according to the evolution of the ensemble and its character defining features;
 - c) Overarching conservation philosophy and specific principles for conservation interventions in accordance to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property and other relevant local values, including principles applied during the present works;
 - d) Costed and prioritised conservation action plan for all component parts of the architectural ensemble with a timeframe for implementation;
 - e) Additional measures for presentation, interpretation, environmental control, fire prevention, risk preparedness, maintenance and monitoring;
 - f) There is a need to build on the research that has been carried out during the project to build up a greater understanding of what fabric remains from the 6th century church, and of its original appearance.
- 4 **A Table of Contents for a Conservation Plan** has been suggested (see page 11) to meet the requirements of the World Heritage Committee Decision adopted in 2016. It would be appropriate that this should be completed by February 2018 for consideration by the World Heritage Committee in that year.
- 5 Immediate measures should be taken for the **prevention of fire**, and until complete dispositions are planned and put in place.
- 6 There is also a need for the preparation of a **Management Plan for the World Heritage property**, including the Church and the Pilgrimage route in its overall context at the heart of Bethlehem. This should be based on the Historic Urban Landscape approach to develop the management and conservation policies. It would be desirable that this should be completed, ideally, by February 2018 within the same timescale as the Conservation Plan for the Church, particularly in view of the development plans for Manger Square tunnel and Village.

- 7 The potential negative impacts on the World Heritage property of the **proposals for both the Manger Square Tunnel and for Manger Square Village** are of considerable concern. While the aim of freeing Manger Square of parking and through traffic is laudable, the proposals could impact on individual buildings in the Nativity complex (e.g. The Armenian Convent) and on the overall World Heritage property and its archaeology by creating a tunnel/ cutting under Manger street between the Church of the Nativity and the Manger Square that increases through traffic and creates an obstacle between the Church of the Nativity and Manger Square.
- 8 **These proposals should be halted** until a Traffic Management Plan, or a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, has been put in place, and solid justifications for their need have been made. One possible strategy could involve a car park at the roundabout at the start of Star Street, together with a further carpark on Manger Street to the north; this might obviate the need for the Manger Square Tunnel and Village, allowing the pedestrianisation of Manger Square and a smaller, more appropriately scaled, development in this location.
- 9 Future proposals guided by that Plan could then be considered and **Heritage Impact Assessments** prepared for each of them. Salvage excavations should be undertaken before a decision while any adopted project. Such proposed major interventions would need to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre, for review by ICOMOS and might need to be considered by the World Heritage Committee.
- 10 The transportation and movement within in the historic area of Bethlehem, including access to the Church of the Nativity and its surrounding, as well as lack of parking space are key issues and should be addressed as a priority through the development of clear and definite policies in a city-level **Traffic Management Plan, or a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan**. The mission welcomes the initiative of the Municipality to develop a mobility plan at Bethlehem city scale with technical support from the municipality of Paris.
- 11 In conclusion, and in light of the quality of the restoration works on major elements of the property including the roof of the Nativity Church, which address the major aspects of the corrective measures to meet the requested Desired State of Conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger, **the State Party may wish to request the World Heritage Committee for to remove the property from List of World Heritage in Danger if a detailed timetable can be agreed for the completion of the remaining Corrective Measures.**

ANNEXES

1	Terms of Reference of the mission	24
2	Programme of the mission	26
3	Composition of the mission team	27
4	Maps of site and World Heritage property	28
5	Photographs and illustrations	30

APPENDICES

- A. Presentation on the Restoration of roof, windows and narthex of the Nativity Church in Bethlehem, by The Palestinian Presidential Committee (Prof. Claudio Alessandri)
- B. Presentation on the proposed projects within the World Heritage Site, by the Municipality of Bethlehem



TOR of the joint WHC/ ICOMOS Advisory Mission

The property was inscribed on the list of World Heritage in Danger in 2012 at the same time that it was inscribed on the World Heritage List, in response to the submission of an Emergency Nomination by the State Party. The emergency situation related to the way the Church had suffered from the lack of proper regular and restoration works because of the political situation in the area and region since 1967. The main decay and degradation of the architectural complex was considered by the State Party to be caused by:

- Water penetration through the roof and damage to interior wall surfaces;
- The use of inappropriate building materials;
- Lack of proper maintenance, especially in the last 50 years;
- The huge number of visitors that are adding to the speed of deterioration inside the Church.

In 2015, the World Heritage Committee (**Decision: 39 COM 7A.2**) adopted *the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) and corrective measure*.

The State Party states that the Desired State of Conservation and related Corrective Measures developed for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger were successfully achieved in April 2015 when the Roof restoration works were completed. Moreover, the Narthex roof cross vaults restoration works are in the final stage and planned to be completed by end of April 2016. Accordingly, the State of Palestine is requesting the World Heritage Committee to consider the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger.

Objective of the Mission

The main objective of this advisory mission is to assess, before the removal of the scaffolding from the Nativity Church, the implementation of the corrective measures and whether the Desired State of Conservation has been achieved in order to allow the property to be removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger.

The Advisory Mission shall:

1. Evaluate the state of conservation of the roof of the Nativity Church property, with particular attention to progress made in undertaking the *corrective measures* and achieving the Desired State of Conservation. These are:
 - a) *DSOC:*

Completed conservation and repair of the roof structure of the Church of the Holy Nativity.
 - b) *Corrective measures:*
 - (i) *Complete a full investigative survey of the historic timbers and lead work of the roof, identifying the age and historical significance of the various component parts.*
 - (ii) *Develop a Conservation Plan that synthesis the conclusions of the detailed*

investigative survey into a clear statement of the significances of the various elements of the roof within a comprehensive conservation philosophy for the roof restoration project.

(iii) Prepare a detailed project specification for the roof repairs that allow a full understanding of which elements of the roof will be maintained, which repaired and which replaced.

(iv) Undertake the roof repair project, including stabilizing the vaults of the Narthex, and document its interventions.

2. Discuss with relevant institutions the overall conservation and management of the property and its buffer zone;
3. Prepare a concise report on the state of conservation of the Nativity including recommendations to be submitted to the State of Palestine 5 weeks upon return of the mission. The mission report should allow the World Heritage Committee to assess whether or not the Desired State of Conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger has been achieved.

Annex 2 Programme

31st August: Arrival of ICOMOS and UNESCO/WHC representatives

Day 1: 1st Sept. 2016

9:00- 9:30: Welcoming by MoTA & the Municipality and introduction of the mission's TOR

9:30 – 11:00: Nativity Church

- Introduction of the Church's History and interventions by the Municipality and Presidential Committee (venue: Municipality)
- Introduction of the DSOC and related corrective measures by MoTA
- Site Visit to the Church lead by PC 1:30 – 3:00 Lunch Break

15:00 – 18:00: Discussion & Assessment

Results of the First Day:

- Introduction of TOR and mission's aims
- Introduction of the history of the site and conservation interventions
- Implementation of the DSOC and related corrective measures
- Site visit to the property and evaluating the conservation interventions.
- Discussion and primary assessment

Day 2: 2nd Sept. 2016

9:00 – 10:30: Field visit to proposed projects and pilgrimage route lead by Municipality and CCHP

10:30 - 13:00: Presentation of proposed projects within the WHP by the Municipality and CCHP

13:00- 14:00: Lunch Break

14:00 – 15:30: Introduction of the management and state of conservation of the WHP and its buffer zone by the Municipality and CCHP

15:30 – 19:30: Discussion and assessment

Results of the second Day:

- Introduction of the WHP state of conservation
- Introduction and primary evaluation of proposed projects within the WHP
- field visit to the locations of proposed projects
- Discussion and primary assessment

Day 3: Free day

Day 4: Departure of ICOMOS and UNESCO/WHC representatives

Annex 3 Composition of mission team

1. ICOMOS Representative: Richard Griffiths MA(Cantab) DipArch GradDiplCons(AA) RIBA AABC
2. UNESCO World Heritage Centre representative: Junaid Sorosh Wali (Architect, Head of Culture Unit at UNESCO Ramallah Office)

People met on the mission:

Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA): H. E. Rula Ma'ayah, Dr. Ahmed Rjoob, Dr. Wael Hamamreh and Arch. Ziad Abu-Odeh

Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation (CCHP): Arch. Issam Juha, Arch. Fatin Lafi

Bethlehem Municipality: Mayor, Ms. Vera Baboun, Arch. Enas Marzuqa and Michael Handala

Presidential Committee: Eng. Imad Nassar, Arch. Issa Murra and Arch. Afif and H.E. Ms Khouloud Daibes

Project manager/ adviser: Prof Claudio Alessandri

Contractor: Giammarco Piacenti and members of his team

Focal point of the Mission: Dr. Ahmed Rjoob, Director General of southern North governorate (MoTA) and National Focal Point for World Cultural Heritage in Palestine

1.d Geographical coordinates to the nearest second

Grotto:	Latitude	31° 42' 14" N
	Longitude	35° 12' 25" E
B1:	Latitude	31° 42' 17" N
	Longitude	35° 12' 35" E
B2:	Latitude	31° 42' 04" N
	Longitude	35° 12' 28" E
B3:	Latitude	31° 42' 18" N
	Longitude	35° 12' 03" E
B4:	Latitude	31° 42' 32" N
	Longitude	35° 12' 14" E
C1:	Latitude	31° 42' 19" N
	Longitude	35° 12' 13" E
C2:	Latitude	31° 42' 16" N
	Longitude	35° 12' 14" E
C3:	Latitude	31° 42' 12" N
	Longitude	35° 12' 21" E
C4:	Latitude	31° 42' 12" N
	Longitude	35° 12' 31" E
C5:	Latitude	31° 42' 15" N
	Longitude	35° 12' 33" E
C6:	Latitude	31° 42' 25" N
	Longitude	35° 12' 14" E



Fig. 1.3 Map of the Nomination Area

- Church of the Nativity
- Convents Surrounding the Church; the Greek Orthodox Convent, Franciscan Monastery and Armenian Convent
- Pilgrimage Route and the Gardens East of the Church
- Buffer Zone

Annex 5 Photographs



5.1 The team



5.2 The repaired roof



5.3 Re-leaded aisle roofs with reopened rainwater outlets



5.4 New rainwater shoot



5.5 New double-glazed clerestory windows



5.6 Relaid narthex roof stone paving over waterproofing layer



5.7 Conserved doors to the narthex



5.8 Repointed stonework to external high level elevations



5.9 Palm Sunday mosaic with mother of pearl inlay, missing gold tesserae painted red



5.10 Complete range of mosaic tesserae



5.12 Angel with restored face and background



5.11 Mosaic following cleaning and conservation



5.13 Nave columns cleaned with uncleared patch



5.14 Constantinean mosaics below floor hatches



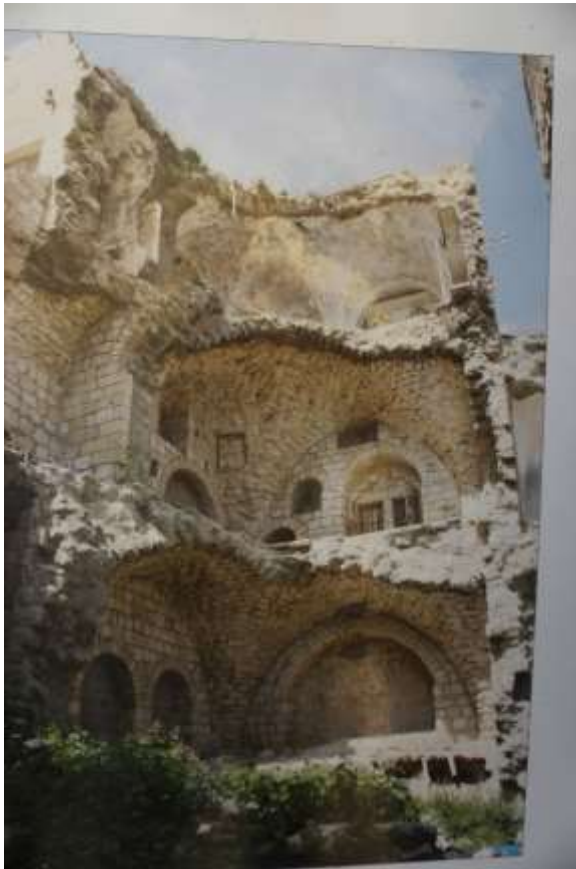
5.15 Nave architraves and mosaic during cleaning



5.16 Nave capitals, architraves and soffits after cleaning



5.17 Entrance to Star Street from the north



5.18 Hosh – before



5.19 Hosh - after



5.20 Proposed route of Manger Square Tunnel (cutting) in blue, pedestrian bridges in red
Armenian Patriarchate car park site for Manger Square Village to the SE



5.21 Location of proposed entrance to the Manger Square Tunnel



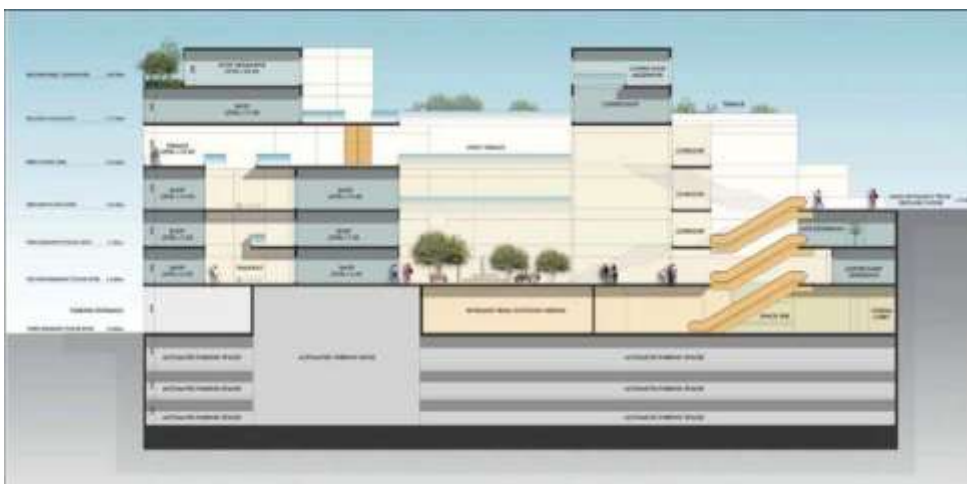
5.22 Location of proposed exit from the Manger Square Tunnel, Armenian Patriarchate car park to the right, buildings behind and to the right would be demolished



5.23 Aerial view of proposed Manger Square Village



5.24 View of proposed Manger Square Village from Manger Square



5.25 Section of proposed Manger Square Village (Manger Square to the right)