# Report on the implementation of the Recommendations mentioned in the Decision: 43 COM 7B.104 to be examined by the World Heritage Committee

#### **Executive Summary**

The State Party Eritrea has been working toward the implementation of the World Heritage Committee Decision on 43 COM 7B.104 for Asmara- a Modernist City of Africa. Since the inscription of the property, Eritrea has made some progress on the implementation of the recommendations and decision by the World Heritage Committee. We summarize State of Conservation Report as the following: -

In our previous reporting period of the State of Conservation Report, the State Party estimated the timeframe for the completion of UCMP and APTR in 2019. Due to COVID-19 and other unforeseen circumstances, the initial estimated timeframe require revision. Therefore, the State Party Eritrea has extended the timeframe for completion of the UCMP by 2021 in order to develop sound UCMP strategies and appropriate instrument to implement the plan. The State Party will undertake all the necessary measures to finalize the UCMP and APTR this year, we will also submit the final report to UNESCO - World Heritage Centre in November 2021 for review by advisory bodies.

Eritrea's first ever Cultural and Natural Heritage Proclamation (CNHP) was enacted in 2015. For the implementation of the Proclamation, a Managing Director and the Eritrean Cultural and Natural Heritage Board have to be established, it also requires human and financial resources. The State Party understood World Heritage Committee's concern and will facilitate for the urgent declaration of Asmara as a Protected Site for its preservation and conservation. The State Party would like to reassure you that we are working on it.

The recent initiation of Local Economic Development Plan study will respond to these needs of the IMP and to the World Heritage Committee Recommendation. The overall objective of the LEDP study is to develop financial strategies including establishing conservation fund, to link economic development and heritage promotion. It will give high consideration to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the World Heritage property and buffer zone. The study will be undertaken in 2021.

The State Party has been carrying out various capacity building programme in order to improve the institutional and technical capacity of the Central Region Administration (the Asmara Heritage Project). Through UNESCO and EU generous financial support, various programmes are under implementation. The ongoing capacity building programmes will result in significant improvement in skills and human resources to undertake conservation work as well as managing the World Heritage Property. At present, Eritrea is focusing to build its human resources capacity and public awareness raising activities on the World Heritage Property.

Eritrea has expressed its strong commitment and engagement since the creation of the Asmara Heritage Project prior to the recommendation of the World Heritage Committee to set up appropriate institutional arrangement. There are ongoing discussions between the Central Region Administration and Commission of Culture and Sports how AHP be better organized to fulfill as the central management body of Asmara World Heritage Property. The revised organizational structures of AHP will provide a range of functional responsibilities, better coordination and management of the World Heritage Site. This request by the World Heritage Committee has not yet fully addressed, however, the State Party Eritrea has been working on this regards and will be reporting to the World Heritage Centre (WHC) in due time.

### 2. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

In Decision 43 COM 7B.104, the World Heritage requested the following information

5. Requests the State Party to finalize and submit to the World Heritage Centre both the UCMP and the APTR, for review by the Advisory Bodies;

#### Response (5):

The Asmara Heritage Project (AHP) is responsible for the preparation of the Urban Conservation Master Plan and the Asmara Planning and Technical Regulations. AHP has been working with an Italian international consultant Atelier P 95 S.r.l. Concerning the UCMP and APTR progress, the following activities have been carried out: -

The UCMP study is too vast to accomplish and requires a multidisciplinary approach. The UCMP require a complete understanding of the city; of its past and present conditions. The area of the World Heritage Site is about 370ha comprising of 480 parcel blocks. The data collection for over 4300 buildings, 257 roads (about 80km) and 38 public open spaces have been completed. Analyses of the conservation of the buildings, technical infrastructures, and public open spaces are in good progress. Various technical plans and drawings for the UCMP have been prepared. Over 80,000documents, including architectural drawings, technical specification and other related documents have been digitally scanned.

Currently, the AHP is working on full capacity to finalize the UCMP and APTR. All the necessary data is supplied by the national experts of AHP, the consultant Atelier P95 Srl. has been working on the analyses and is developing the strategy. The outputs expected are UCMP for architecture, conservation for the urban fabric as part of the urban landscape, a plan for services, a plan for mobility and traffic, developing action plans with clear priorities for the conservation on interventions, and budget proposals for restoration and renovation programmes. The final draft APTR has been developed and circulated for review by the Steering Committee and key stakeholders. This study is advancing but it could not be finalized with the proposed timeframe because of: -

1) The study area is too vast which comprise over 470Ha land and require comprehensive data collection and updating. As a result, collection of additional information has taken longer time than expected;

2) The task required highly qualified international conservation experts to carry out the analyses and to formulate conservation polices and guidelines. Hence, a revised contract agreement was delayed to be signed with international consultant (Atelier P95) and AHP on March 2019 as per EU contract guidelines to complete the assignment;

3) Besides, the AHP office has encountered shortage of technological equipment (e.g. wide angle lens cameras and powerful computers to store the huge data) which became bottle neck for the performance of the activities;

4) The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic On March 6. The Eritrean Government acted quickly and prepared measures to curb the spread of COVID-19. By April 2 it announced a Nationwide Look down, all government office and school, private business activities were closed, public transport stopped. In comparison, with many other developing countries, Eritrea's lockdown regulations were strict. All citizens were instructed not to leave their homes other than to access for food, medicine, and banks, and only workers defined as '**essential service'** providers could move from home to their work stations. The state deployed thousands of military and police personnel to enforce these restrictions. As a result, the project activities have been also heavily affected by the lockdown measures at national and international level. Likewise, the international consultants could not be able to work at home effectively and to travel to Asmara for working missions, and this hampered the undertaking of discussions with key stakeholders.

In our previous reporting period of the State of Conservation Report, the State Party estimated the timeframe for the completion of UCMP and APTR in 2019. Due to the above mentioned challenges and unforeseen circumstances', the initial estimated timeframe require revision. Therefore, the State Party has extended the timeframe for completion of the UCMP by 2021 in order to develop sound UCMP and detail conservation planning as well as technical regulation.

The State Party will undertake all the necessary measures to finalize the UCMP and APTR this year, we will also submit the final report to UNESCO - World Heritage Centre in November 2021 for review by advisory bodies.

#### **6. Also requests** the State Party to:

a) Urgently complete the issuing of the specific protective designations for the property, as previously requested and as per the provisions of the Eritrean Cultural and Natural Heritage Proclamation (2015), with an implementation calendar to monitor advancements in this regard,

#### Response (6a):

Eritrea's Cultural Institutions were disintegrated among various government organizations. In order to bring all together, the Government has created Commission of Culture and Sports (CCS) is the sole responsible government body for both culture and sports since 2014. It formulates policy and regulatory body for the nation's cultural and sports development. It has also established department of Culture and Sports in the six administrative regions of Eritrea to decentralize its mandate. Since the establishment of the CCS, it has been working to unify fragmented cultural institutions and laid down appropriate organizational structure. Currently, CCS is consolidating its organization structure and it is in a transition phase.

The Commission of Culture and Sports and the Central Region Administration have been working in close coordination and collaboration in various cultural projects, specifically with Asmara Heritage Project. This has been demonstrated in recently successful Asmara UNESCO- World Heritage Dossier preparation. The Integrated Management Plan (IMP, 2016-2021) was prepared in collaboration with the Central Region Administration (Municipality of Asmara), the Commission of Culture and Sports and Ministry of Education in 2014-2016 with extensive consultation with public, private and community representatives. The overall aim is to protect and conserve the OUV of the site and created common vision for managing the World Heritage Site. The IMP was endorsed in September 2016 by the Minister of Education, Governor of the Central Region Administration, and the Commissioner of Culture and Sports. The IMP serves as an official document in managing the World Heritage Property and the State Party is working towards the implementation of the programme as outlined in the document. In addition, the IMP fully recognized the delimitation boundaries of the World Heritage Site and the Buffer Zone by the key stakeholders.

Eritrea's first ever Cultural and Natural Heritage Proclamation (CNHP) was enacted in 2015. For the implementation of the Proclamation, a Managing Director and the Eritrean Cultural and Natural Heritage Board has to be established, it also requires human and financial resources.

The State Party understood the World Heritage Committee's concern and will facilitate for the urgent declaration of Asmara as a Protected Site for its preservation and conservation. The State Party would like to reassure you that we are working on it.

### b) Finalize the financial strategy and establish the proposed Conservation Fund for the sustained conservation and management of the property, and for capacity building;

Response (6b):

In response to these recommendations, the State Party Eritrea has initiated a Local Economic Development Plan for Asmara: A Modernist City of Africa World Heritage Property. The State Party has already requested to the World Heritage Centre for international assistance to carry out the study in November 2020. AHP has already conducted baseline data collection on the socio-economic situation of the city and at the World Heritage Property during 2015. This report gave a good insight about the socioeconomic situation of the city. However, it does not serve as key financial strategic document on how to develop the conservation fund and how to ensure a steady influx of financial resources towards preservation of the built heritage. This proposed project aim is to update the above mentioned socio-economic study of 2015 report in line with the UNESCO 2011 Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation and the Operational Guidelines of the 1972 World Heritage Convention in order to elaborate a Local Economic Development Plan (LED) for Asmara. Besides, the Integrated Management Plan (IMP, 2016-2021) of Asmara World Heritage Site had identified the Socio-Economic Development as one of the key action area that required to be addressed. The recent initiation of LED study will respond to these needs of the IMP and to the World Heritage Committee Recommendation.

The overall objective of the LED study is to develop financial strategies including the establishment of conservation fund, to link economic development and heritage promotion. The study will be undertaken in 2021 and it will give high consideration to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the livelihoods of communities living in the World Heritage property and buffer zone.

In addition, the AHP conducted a series of capacity building workshops to respond to the Committee recommendation for "Finalising the Urban Conservation Master Plan and the Asmara Planning Norms and Technical Regulations" through a Netherlands Fundsin-Trust to UNESCO project in December 2018 and March 2019 in line with the UNESCO 2011 Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation. The State Party of Eritrea organized a capacity building workshop in Asmara on applying the UNESCO 2011 Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation (HUL) to the Conservation Master Plan for Asmara: A Modernist African City World Heritage property from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> December 2018. Twenty participants including Eritrean architects and urban experts, local stakeholders and decision-makers attended in the workshop. The first capacity building workshops that are part of the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust to UNESCO Project "Conservation of Asmara: The Modernist City of Africa. *Eritrea.*" The Asmara Heritage Project had organised the workshop in partnership with the UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa. The workshop aims were to provide capacity building on the HUL Recommendation and tools for the Asmara Heritage Project and Department of Public Works development. At this workshop, international expert, Dr Muhammad Jumma was invited to provide the training. It covers the following topics: an overview of the history of urban planning as well as case studies of urban planning at cities in Africa, in depth overview of the HUL recommendation, participants' reflection on the application of HUL to the Eritrean context, the importance of community participation and involvement in the management process was highlighted as the key to sustainable management of the city. The second session workshop was conducted from 18 to 22 March 2019. The following HUL tools were covered civic engagement, knowledge and planning, regulatory and financial tools. During the workshop each tool was explained, examples were demonstrated, and cases studies from other countries were evoked.

Though EU Funding, AHP has been implementing a project entitled capacity building for safeguarding Asmara's Historic Urban Environment. AHP signed an agreement with the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies - DAStU – Politecnico di Milano to undertake advanced training programme on the Conservation and Management of Heritage Sites. The training program aims to obtain a new common, shared and widespread attitude towards monuments and built heritage in general, empowering and strengthening local capacities in fulfilling plans and interventions. The first phase was conducted in 2017 in three weeks' period; the main aim of the first phase training was to produce future conservators and managers of heritage sites. The participants of this training were selected from different stakeholders' institutions that have a relation with cultural heritages. Overall, sixty (60) trainees participated in the courses provided. The second phase of the training is planned to be carried out in 2021, and it will focus on producing technicians that will participate in future restoration and conservation of cultural heritage sites.

**7. Further requests** the State Party to specify how the Asmara Heritage Project will act as a central management body for all aspects related with the property and will liaise and coordinate with other governmental authorities responsible for urban planning and development in and around the World Heritage property;

#### Response (7):

The Central Region Administration (CRA) is the parent institution for Department of Public Works Development (DPWD) and AHP. The DPWD has three key technical divisions including Urban Planning Division, Building and Supervision Division, Road and Maintenance Division. The DPWD is responsible for maintaining and improving Asmara's infrastructure, as well as safeguarding its urban heritage through the enforcement of planning and building regulations. It has more than 150 staff of diverse professions including: architects, planners, engineers, Geomteras and technicians. The AHP is an institution within DPWD.

The AHP was established in March 2014 under the Auspices of the Central Region Administration (Municipality of Asmara) with a remit to prepare the necessary materials for the inscription of Asmara onto UNESCO's World Heritage list and to safeguard the city's rich architectural heritage. The AHP operates as autonomous office with its own staff and has mandate to undertake various studies and researches. Financially, it has its own operating budget and periodically submits reports and prepare various proposals on the World Heritage Site and Buffer Zone. AHP is also responsible for the implementation projects financed by donor organisations. At present, AHP has 20 staff with variety of professions including architects, urban planners, engineers, Auto CAD and GIS operators, archivists and management team. Currently, the AHP is the principal body responsible for managing the World Heritage Site and for the preparation of the Urban Conservation Master Plan. AHP is also undertaking the role of coordination around the World Heritage Property and Buffer zone. Some of the achievements of the office since its relatively recent establishment include: -

- The preparation of a 1,300-pages Nomination Dossier for UNESCO inscription, which was successfully accomplished in 2017;
- A summary of the Nomination Dossier also won the prestigious RIBA President's Medal for Research in 2016:https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/knowledge-landing-page/ribapresidents-awards-for-research-2016-winners;
- AHP has also prepared the necessary supplementary studies for the nomination dossier and for the long-term management of the site, including the Integrated Management Plan, the Disaster and Risk Management Framework and Socio-Economic Report;
- In addition, the AHP conducted a survey for over 4,300 buildings within the historic perimeter,
- Scanned over 80,000 archival documents from the Municipal Technical Archives, and developed a database system to store both the contemporary survey information and archival information to be retrieved for professional assessment;
- Currently, the office is preparing the Urban Conservation Master Plan and APTR for the whole perimeter which is due to be completed this year 2021

Eritrea has expressed its strong commitment and engagement since the creation of the Asmara Heritage Project prior to the recommendation of the World Heritage Committee to set up appropriate institutional arrangement. There are ongoing discussions between the Central Region Administration and Commission of Culture and Sports how AHP be better organized to fulfill as the central management body of Asmara World Heritage Property. The revised organizational structures of AHP will provide a range of functional responsibilities, better coordination and management of the World Heritage Site. This request by the World Heritage Committee has not yet fully addressed, however, the State Party Eritrea has been working on this regards and will be reported to the World Heritage Centre (WHC).

There is very close coordination between AHP and Urban Planning Division (UPD) of Department of Public Works Development (DoPWD) since the establishment of AHP in 2014. AHP is also working closely with Urban Planning Division of DoPWD - in the preparation of detailed Urban Conservation Master Plan of Asmara World Heritage Site. The draft Urban Conservation Master Plan is circulated to DoPWD in charge of regional and citywide development planning and to all relevant stakeholders for further review. There were number of sectorial meetings carried out with DoWPD and Department of Urban Development of Ministry of Public Works (national institution in charge of Urban planning) in order to make sure that all requirements of the UCMP are considered and harmonized in line with the Strategic Urban Development Plan of Greater Asmara Area. The Final Urban Conservation Master Plan will be adopted by several state authorities.

#### 7.1 Other organizational activities

#### a) Public Activities

- AHP organised a celebration of Africa World Heritage Day for the first time in Asmara in collaboration with the Central Region Administration and UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern African on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019 as public awareness to promote conservation of rich urban heritage. The Africa World Heritage Day was celebrated on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019 in the capital, Asmara, under the theme "Heritage and Innovation". At the event, government senior officials, representatives of UN offices in Eritrea, community representative and various professionals were participated. As we all know, UNESCO World Heritage Committee dedicated May 5 to celebrate Africa World Heritage Day.
- AHP in collaboration with the Central Region Administration presented Asmara exhibition at Expo compound during Eritrean Annual Festival in August 2018 and 2019. The purpose of the exhibitions was to celebrate Asmara's inscription on the UNESCO-World Heritage List and to raise public awareness on conservation of Asmara World Heritage Property.
- The Public Engagement activity carried out by the Asmara Heritage Project (AHP) and staff and students of the MA Architecture and Historic Urban Environments (MAHUE), UCL. This collaborative and award-winning research has resulted in many different outputs, culminating in Asmara's inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2017. The AHP, as the office responsible for managing the World Heritage Site, is currently developing the Urban Conservation Management Plan (UCMP), an important component of which is the Stakeholder Engagement Plan. With limited resources, the AHP has not been able to undertake any substantial public engagement activities to date, so it was agreed that the MAHUE Field Trip in January 2020 offered an ideal opportunity to support the AHP and to learn from their experiences managing such a large and complex urban site.

The purpose of this public engagement activity was to assess peoples' awareness of heritage matters in Asmara and to promote the idea of citizen participation and collaboration. Members of the public from different age groups, occupations, places and interests were involved and were asked voluntarily to answer three simple and clear questions about Asmara. The questions were in English and in Tigrigna for the ease of understanding for those who can read and write in either language. Ten sites were selected within the World Heritage Site for conducting the activity based on their respective locations for certain demographics. The report has been compiled by the AHP in collaboration with MAHUE and will help as base for the HUL application.

### b) International cooperation

- Participated Sub-regional webinars with Site Managers in the framework of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting in the Africa Region on 4th December 2020;
- Participated Skype Conference Meeting between the World Heritage Centre, the Site Managers and Focal Points from World Heritage cities in the Africa region: Exchanges of Experiences and Views on 5th October 2020;
- Participated on Modern Heritage of Africa Online Brainstorming Session organized by African World Heritage Fund(AWHF) and University of Cape Town(UCT) from 20-27<sup>th</sup> August 2020;
- Participated on UNESCO- World Heritage Cities programme organised the first World Heritage City Lab online from 17 to 26 June 2020 in consultation with ICOMOS, ICCROM and IUCN organised by UNESCO- World Heritage Centre;
- Participated on Training Workshop for World Heritage Site Managers in the Framework of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting in Africa Anglophone countries for World Heritage Site Managers organized by the Government of Kenya, AWHF, WHC, UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa that held from 19-22 February 2020, Nairobi, Kenya;
- Participated on 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts (ICSOE) organized by Economic Commission for the Eastern Africa office that was held in Asmara from 05-07<sup>th</sup> November 2019;
- Participated on International Colloquium 'Culture for the Future Creativity, Innovation and Dialogue for Inclusive Development, organised by the Commission of European Union which took place from 16<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> June 2019, at Palais De Beaux Arts (BOZAR) in Brussels;
- Participated on Symposium organized by the Free University of Bolzano/ South Tyrol held from 30<sup>th</sup> January to 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019 in Bolzano, Italy.

**8. Strongly invites** the State Party to seek international financial and technical support towards the preparation of detailed conservation proposals, including criteria, methods and materials to be used for the conservation and restoration of the 14 historical buildings identified as an initial priority conservation and restoration phase and submit such proposals to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;

### Response (8):

Since 2018, State Party – Eritrea has commenced discussion and communication with UNESCO, UNOPS, EU, Getty Foundation, and other potential donors to seek international financial and technical assistance for the urgent rehabilitation and conservation needs of 14 prominent historical buildings, which identified by the government as priorities.

Eritrea has expressed its strong interest seeking for international financial and technical interest to prepare detail conservation proposals for the identified 14 prominent historical buildings. Although there are tremendous efforts underway, however, the State Party has not yet secured funding for the conservation and restoration phase. Nevertheless, the State Party will continue its relentless effort seeking for funding. When the appropriate detail conservation studies are ready for the identified prominent

historical buildings, we will submit the proposal to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory bodies.

Eritrea's conservation strategy toward the built environment is comprehensive and Holistic in its approach; it is not only focusing on historical buildings but it includes infrastructure, public and open spaces. In the past two years, the Central Region Administration earmarked budget for upgrading the infrastructure in the city centre including the World Heritage Boundary and Buffer zone. Infrastructure upgrading activities include: overlaying of ruined roads, upgrading sidewalk, replacement of old sewage and drainage pipelines were carried out. In Asmara Historic City, Ge'za Banda neighborhood infrastructures upgrading such as existing road improvement, old water supply and sewerage system for over 45 years has not been repaired. As a result, it was ruined. The neighborhood community was suffered from deterioration of the infrastructure. Recently, the city administration took initiative and implemented Ge'za Banda infrastructure upgrading project. Overall, 7km length roads and 8.5km length sidewalks were repaired and rehabilitated. The implementation of this project has positively contributed for smooth movement of public transport, people and goods.

In addition, the AHP in collaboration with Eritrean Mapping and Information Centre (EMIC) and the Bartlett School of Architecture (UCL) has conducted a baseline study using 3D scans survey of 14 buildings for detail conservation and restoration purposes.

The Government of Eritrea is currently in a transition phase following the Peace Agreement signed with Ethiopia, which is also positively affecting its international relations, the conditions are now more favorable to Eritrea to organize an international donors' conference/forum to support Asmara World Heritage site. Thus, the State Party of Eritrea is working on to seek funding for technical expertise and capacity building in order to ensure the 'Outstanding Universal Values' of Eritrea's first World Heritage property are safeguarded for current and future generations.

## 3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State Party (ies) which may have an impact on the Property's Outstanding Universal Value

In November 2020, a war broke out between Ethiopian Federal Government and Tigray Regional Government, the conflict expanded its scope rapidly. As a result, the Tigray Regional Government (TPLF Rebels) escalated the conflict toward Eritrea and they launched some rockets to bombard Asmara city. Fortunately, there were no human as well as building casualties encountered. All the bombs were dropped outside of Asmara World Heritage Property and the buffer zone (see attached map for further information). At present, the war is over and the federal government has defeated the Tigray Regional Government rebels and has controlled the region thoroughly. If the rocket bombs were dropped at the city centre, undoubtedly, there would have been human as well as historical buildings causalities and its impact on the OUV might encountered severe damage.

At present, we would like to assure you that there is no threat which can impact the World Heritage Property's Outstanding Universal Value. 4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines describe any potential major restorations alteration and/or new construction(s) intended within the property and the buffer zone s and/or corridors or other areas where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property including authenticity and integrity.

Currently, there are no major restoration or new construction projects in the World Heritage Property and the buffer zone which may affect potentially the Outstanding Universal Value of the Property including the authenticity and integrity. The State Party will report to the World Heritage Centre when there are intentions of potential projects such as major restoration, alteration, and/or new construction in the World Heritage Property to comply with the paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

#### 5. Public access to the state of conservation report

We don't have any objection to this report being uploaded on UNESCO- World Heritage Centre State conservation report information system websites.

**9. Finally requests** the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 2020, 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 45th session in 2021

#### Response (9):

Eritrean Government imposed very strict lockdown measures since April 2020 to curb spread of COVID-19 pandemic nationwide. The lookdown measure has not yet been lifted during this reporting period due to the second wave of Coronavirus infections rate that has been raised. All public and private activities have been closed for over 9months. As a result, it was difficult to compile the report in time to submit on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020. Hence, due to the above mentioned circumstances submitting the SOC report has been delayed.

AGE

Signature of the Authorities,

Medhanie Teklemariam Site Manager, Asmara World Heritage Property

